PATHWAY TO GOD

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Prayer

to Lord Rudra Shiva

(Stanzawise Translation in English)

ॐ अग्नाविष्णू सजोषसे मा वर्धन्तु वां गिरः ।
द्युम्नैर्वाजेभिरागतम् ॥

Oh Agna-Vishnu (The deities of Agni & Vishnu), we ardently desire that both of you love each other with the same happiness and our speech and words grow in radiance with utterance of praise of both you. We invite you to be the amongst us with your articles and provisions of food and drink which will give us energy and strength.

वाजश्च मे प्रसवश्च मे प्रयतिश्च मे प्रसितिश्च मे
धीतिश्च मे क्रतुश्च मे स्वरश्च मे श्लोकश्च मे
श्रावश्च मे श्रुतिश्च मे ज्योतिश्च मे सुवश्च मे
प्राणश्च मेऽपानश्च मे व्यानश्च मेऽसुश्च मे चित्तं
च म आधीतं च मे वाक्च मे मनश्च मे चक्षुश्च
मे श्रोत्रं च मे दक्षश्च मे बलं च म ओजश्च मे
सहश्च म आयुश्च मे जरा च म आत्मा च मे
तनूश्च मे शर्म च मे वर्म च मेऽङ्गानि च
मेऽस्थानि च मे परूँषि च मे शरीराणि च मे ॥१॥

Let the food be mine, let the hunger for food be mine, let the effort for food be mine, let the restraint for food be mine, let the thirst be mine, let the (oblations) for sacrifice be mine, let the uttering of sound be mine, let the verses be mine, let the listenings be mine, let the sacred words be mine, let the (radiant) light be mine, let the heaven be mine, let the Prāna (Vayu) be mine, let the Apān (Vayu) be mine, let the Vyān (Vayu) be mine, let the Vayu inclusive of all the three be mine, let the thoughts be mine, let the studied knowledge be mine, let the talking ability be mine, let the mind be mine, let the eyes be mine, let the ears be mine, let the alertness be mine, let the strength be mine, let the vigour be mine, let the enduring power be mine, the (full) life time be mine, let the old age be mine, let the soul be mine, let the body be mine, let the happiness be mine, let the covering of body (skin) be mine, let the limbs be mine, let the bones be mine, let the fingers with joints be mine, let the bodies (gross, suble, causal) be mine.

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When spiritual power is generated in the body, it affects the sense organs from within and that leads to experiences of sound, form or light. As that power is infinite, there is no limit to such experiences. We cannot say anything about the beginning and the end of this power. We can only understand that it is infinite and immortal and in it the world lives, moves and has its being. As to why the world is created and destroyed we do not know. Uttering the name of God is the only way by which this power will be generated, grown and firmly established in us. Spiritual power, Absolute God, Divinity are all one. So what we say about the spiritual power is ipso facto true about all of these.

-Gurudeo Ranade

Thus Spake Gurudeo ...

Purity of motive and virtuous conduct as the touch-stones of our spiritual progress. We should search our hearts to see how genuinely we are interested in spiritual life. One should feel God's presence in every nook and corner of the Universe. God is a mass of holiness-in fact. He is Das Heilige (=The Holy). As regards the moral effect of self-realisation, the Bhagavadgita tells us that even though we may seem to have conquered our senses and mind, the flavour for sensual enjoyment remains. The inner flavour, therefore, must be destroyed and this cannot be done without a previous vision of God. (रसवर्जम् रसोऽप्यस्य परदृष्ट्वा निवतति *Bhagwadgita, II. 59)*

◆◆

Even if a saint departs from the world, the form of God he has visualised is abiding, this is what Shri Maharaj used to say. In all, there is a confluence of God, devotee and the Name. When the devotee attains God-head, what remains is God and His Name. This is the highest state. As the saints have realised the lustrous form of God within and thus become holy, they are able to impart holiness to rivers like Ganga, Yamuna and Godavari, when they take bath in their waters. This is the view of Ekanath.

Identity between God and devotee is important and Śhankar's idea of Sayujyata (a mergence) and Ramanuj's idea of Sarupata (becoming like God) are based upon the non-difference or difference between self and God. Different concepts of Mukti or Liberation have come down from ages.

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EDITORIAL

The Indian Heritage

Though the words 'The Indian Heritage' conjure in one's mind instances of Indian music, dance, paintings and sculptures that have come down to us from ancient times, they actually represent a whole system of active worldly life that has been laid down by the sages. Over the span of thousands of years, the system as present today in the society, has undergone changes. Even the main framework is warped and has deteriorated, but the structure of principles on which the system was built up is still clearly visible. In many instances, society has lost sight of the main principles and in some instances, the mere superficials have remained as symbolic rituals. The very fact that the system has survived these thousands of years speaks for its glory and the depth of scientific thought.

The main feature, as envisaged by the seers, was that in whatever one has to do in this world for his personal development or the prosperity of the society, one should not lose sight of the characteristics of the mind and the spirit, i.e. the soul of man. The sages were firm in their belief, through experience in the state of *samadhi,* (i.e. a trance with deep concentration) that the life of a man is not a single event, but a chain of events through births and rebirths dotted by deaths and lived and relived every time with different bodies and circumstances. All through this chain of lives, the permanent feature is the spirit with the mind as its vehicle. If one has to plot the progress of man in his series of births, it will be the progress of the mind and the spirit; the body is nowhere in the picture and thus gets termed as a transient entity. Hence, the importance given to this feature in planning a man's life.

The difference between the Indian heritage and the Western heritage was succinctly expressed by Swami Vivekanand when he said,'In the West, the man thinks that he is the body and has a soul, while in the East, the man thinks that he is the soul and has a body'.

The main feature, or the base value for planning a man's active life, thus got determined. The resultant deeds of one lifespan form the base for the start of the next lifespan. Man is never happy in the state in which he lives. He wants to reach new horizons and new heights with the imagination of the mind he is endowed with and the brain that gives practical shape to the imaginations of the mind. The sages saw to it that there was harmony in a man's activities and the imaginations the mind ought to devise. The mind needs to be trained in such a manner that the ultimate aim of travel towards godhood has to be ensured. Whether a man develops items of music, dance, sculpture, literature or any other fine arts, as also the sex life, the imaginations of the mind should be such that they fall in the category of what's called sublime and do not promote bestial instincts. A man's mind can be shaped into a virtuous divinity or a vicious bestiality. The sages aimed at the former. Thus, honesty, truthfulness, ethics in behaviour and brotherhood follow as essentials for the progress graph to rise upwards.

When an individual departs from one lifespan casting off his body, all the material wealth and relations that, so to say, once belonged to him, are left behind. He is thus a temporary sojourner on the planet called Earth and nothing on earth belongs to him. All belongs to the creator, the Almighty, as said in *Ishāwasya Upanishad : Ishāwasya Idam Sarvam Ten* *tyakten Bhunjithāha Māgrudhaha Kasyaswit Dhanam.* or : all belongs to God. Live within what is allocated to you. *Do not covet what is possessed by others.* What belongs to them is only the abstract value of the progress of the mind.

A man is not alone in this world. He is a part of the human society, the environment of plant and animal life and the inanimate world of mountains, rivers, seas and oceans. All this environment, in the form of Mother Earth, is the giver of life to man. Without the environment, man cannot sustain his life. Indian heritage thus feels duty-bound to pay its respects to all the environment and worship the earth in the form of Mother. So, our behaviour towards the mother of life ought to be like that of worthy sons and daughters. One should use the mother's wealth sparingly and not become a marauder or selfish hoarder. The sage is so filled with gratitude towards Mother Earth, that he asks her 'pardon for touching her with his feet'.

All souls, that is all men, are to ultimately reach godhood through progress from birth to birth. How to realise Him, the Supreme Being ? How to describe Him to the common man, while saying at the same time that 'no words can describe Him?' God has to be brought to the level of human reasoning, so that the common man can understand Him. The sages and seers had experienced in their state of *samadhi* that the souls that have progressed near enough to God do not take rebirth, but remain in their subtle bodies. So do the souls of saints. These souls along with incarnations of gods like *Rama, Krishna* and *Hanuman* as well as deities like *Shiva, Ganesh, Laxmi, Saraswati* and others are eager to help human individuals who have an urge to realise God, while participating in active life. Thus came the symbols and idols, whom men can pray, to worship, and whose benevolence they can seek. They are all manifestations of the Supreme Being, seen and visited by sages in their *samadhi* state. As a matter of fact, they are ordained by the Almighty to help the aspirants. All the deities represent symbols of achievement in worldly life. By worshipping *Ganesh* and *Saraswati,* the younger generations get motivated to reach high ideals in learning and various arts. *Hanuman* and goddess *Durga* become the ideals for athletes and warriors. Even the slogan of Lord *Shiva* motivates a warrior to put in his last ounce of might to earn victories in battles. Goddess *Laxmi* is the motivation for traders and business people. The maxim that all wealth belongs to God and He is the real giver has promoted dedication and service to needy persons.

The ancient sages did not limit themselves only to the relation of the environment on earth with the life of human beings. They studied astronomy, the dynamics of the solar system, the galaxies and distant stars with constant radiations emanating from them. They came out with astrology, the science that explains the effects of radiations from the sun, moon and other planets on life and behaviour of human beings as well as upheavals on the earth. Modern science has not disproved them. On the other hand, American statistical data have proved some of the principles of astrology taken for their sample study.[1]

In olden days, religion was a great motivating force that promoted values in human life. The Hindu way of life, the Indian heritage or the *Sanatan Dharma,* i.e. the code of conduct based on permanent cosmic values of life (in other words, the spiritual values), need to be restudied with reference to modern times and the vast progress of science, in order to reassert the same in modern terminology so that it can carry conviction with the new generation. It is a challenging task before educationists and social scientists. Nonetheless, it is possible with human effort, and will fulfil the need of the hour to bring society back to harmony and excellence which have almost disappeared from the social horizon.

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[1] *The prominent position of planet Mars in horoscopes of men in the army and police dept. was verified as given by B. V. Raman in his Astrological Magazine.*

- P.D. Dharwarkar

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Scientific Properties of Meditation

MEDITATION can thicken certain parts of the brain - and you don't need to be a monk for it, just about half an hour's meditation everyday would suffice-according to a recent study led by Sara Lazar, assistant in psychology at Massachusetts General Hospital.

It has long been known that meditation alters brain patterns in ways that are likely permanent, in other words, meditation is beneficial in more ways than one. This study has shown that certain key parts of the brain get thickened thanks to meditation on an everyday basis.

The study involved 20 people who had an extensive training in Buddhist Insight meditation. Their brain imaging results showed that regular meditation, ie, up to approximately 40 minutes everyday, resulted in increased thickness in cortical regions related to sensory, auditory and visual perception, as well as internal perception (for instance, the automatic monitoring of heart or breathing rate). Most of the brain regions identified to be changed through meditation were found in the right hemisphere, which is essential for sustaining attention. And attention is the focus of meditation.

The study also indicates that regular meditation may slow age-related thinning of the frontal cortex. "What is most fascinating to me is the suggestion that meditation practice can change anyone's gray matter," says study team member Jeremy Gray, an assistant professor of psychology at Yale. Gray also says, "The study participants were people with jobs and families. They just meditated on an average of 40 minutes each day, you don't have to be a monk."

Other forms of yoga and meditation are likely to have a similar impact on brain structure, the researchers speculate, but each tradition probably has a slightly different pattern of cortical thickening based on the specific mental exercises involved.

(Courtesy Science Suppliment of Vijaya Times 30th Nov. 2005)

- P.D. Dharwarkar

Vedanta as Religion

Vedānta to be dynamic should be a religion also. Otherwise it will be cold or passive. Vedānta in its varied forms like Dvaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita, Advaita, Dvaitādvaita, Śudhha Advaita etc. is not only a metaphysical view but also a religion. Vedānta talks of reality as Brahman, the highest. The systems of Vedānta logically workout this. It is religion that translates the reality, Brahman into practice. Values associated with Vedānta like infinity, benignness, Peace and beauty, are values only when they are Practised. It goes without saying that it is only religion through which all these theoretical values are realised. It is through religion that we arrive at a direct experience of reality.

Theoretical cogitation about Brahman, if it be called dry Vedānta, Practical realisation of Brahman is Vedāntic religion. If theoretical problems face a man at every step, in theoretical Vedānta like, 'how' and 'why' the eternal and infinite reality seems to have become limited, Vedāntic religion is not interested in hair-splitting logic, but in determining a personality in relation to values taught by Vedānta. Religion is bent on the intuitional foundations of Vedānta. Religion thus embodies Universal teachings of Vedānta and it is experiential to the core. Technical phraseology, Scholastic diction and rigorous dialectics never interfere in religion. It is feeling that matters much to the religionist. This however does not mean that a Vedāntic religionist is not a well-intentioned enquirer. His is certainly not an unsuspecting and unquestioning acceptance of what lot has been said in the name of Vedānta. On the other hand, he would instantaneously brighten the inquirer with his Universal vedāntic idiom. He discredits all bitterness against such controversies. His is a form of Universal comunication embodying new dimensions and comprehensions, and is appealing.

He confesses the respect and regard to a human being. He is firmly grounded in the experience of reality, whether God or Absolute. He is a man of Universal affiliations and vision. His loving contemplation and illuminations are always towards the existential truth and never to the theoretical. The existential truth, in the perspective of the religionst, is the boundless, the blissful. *'Yo vai bhūma tat sukhaṁ.'* Nothing less than the infinite can attain the infinite! This is the Advaitic philosophy as religion.

II

Coming to Viśiṣṭādvaita perspective of Philosophy as religion. Viśiṣṭādvaita, more importantly is encyclopeadic in its concern for including everything - the *jīvas* (individual Selves) and *Jagat* (the World) - under the umbrella of one infinite Reality viz Brahman or God. The *Jīvas* and the world, in spite of their having distinct existence, are inseparably and intimately related to Brahman. In fact, they both form the body of Brahman or God. It is an organismic relation that holds between God and the world of individual selves. They find their fulfilment in being subservient to the noble intentions of God. The Jīvas adjust their wills to the will of God. They enjoy their inherent bliss by not dissociating themsleves from God, the fountain of love and kindness ! This is a wonderful idea that Rāmanuja Vedānta has contributed to religious Consciousness ! It loosened the artificial barriers of Caste and creed and enabled everyone to embrace God wholeheartedly. It is in this sense, that Viśiṣṭádvaita Vedānta is a real religion.

III

Coming to Dvaita Philosophy, which is very realistic to the aspirations of the confessed religionst, It speaks the hardest truth that the finite individual selves should not be made to lose their distinct existence in an indeterminate entity; God has infact so lovingly granted their existence ! God is the only independent and infinite Reality. The individual selves and the world are finite and absolutely depend on God for their everything, on the sweet will of God. But the speciality of Dvāita Vedānta lies in its accomodative Spirit. God though independent *(Svatantra)* lovingly accommodates the dependent entities and in this sense the Spiritual Unity of mankind is upheld and well protected. The message of Dvaita Vedānta that devotion is the surest means to Godly bliss is the best part of its teaching. It thus overcomes the defects of Religious utopia.

IV

Today's world is a world of din and buzzle, war and crime. A thorough reconstruction of it is very much needed. And it is only through vedāntic religion that such a reconstruction could be done. It is the vedāntic religion, whose rapproachement goes to the intuitionalist foundations of Vedānta. What is needed of a truly religionist is the inner quality of the heart. He should be sure of his view-points on religion. His thirst for leading a pure life should ever increase. Reading of religious texts may be necessary, but it is not all. What is important is the meditative spirit on ONE God, ONE World and ONE Humanity. He should live a life of spiritual pursuits. He should be the instrument of happiness, peace and tranquility. The Vedāntin is a friend of all mankind. He should see light not only in the sun and the moon but in his own heart. Peace and bliss are the inalienable qualities of a Vedāntic religionist. His devotion to truth should take precedence over all other things. Man's contact with worldliness results in spiritual ignorance. He should surrender whole heartedly to the will of God. Sri Aurobindo says: "The divine gives itself to all those who give themselves without reserve and in all their parts to the divine.' He should not be swayed by excessive emotion not supported by reason. He should have his mind well within his fist. He should be pained at the sight of the people's distress. Thus, to consider Vedānta as Religion is an interesting, rewarding and educative experience.

V

The Vedāntin as religionist never delivers a message but radiates it. The Vedāntic religionist does not stop at intellectual satisfaction of the details of the Vedāntic systems. Though the vedāntic system had their birth in India, their message is Universal. Of course there may be differences, amongst themselves with regard to the comprehension of the highest truths etc.

The Vedāntic systems as religion, seek to discover the unity of all existence. Pluralistic and realistic attitudes of experiences are well accommodated in Dvaita, Visistadvaita, Dvaitadvaita and shuddha-Advaita systems as Religion. But from the highest point of view, the reality for Advaita is non-relative and hence religion is accomodated only at the empirical level. Absolute or Nirguṇa Brhman cannot act and work as a religious ideal, as it is an intellectual abstraction.

When it is said that Vedānta is to be viewed as religion, what is meant is that it gives direct knowledge, whether it is of the form of aesthetic or religious. What matters in religion is participation. Religion goes beyond the analysable and the contradictable. It is Participating identity that matters in religion. If so, Vedāntic Philosophy should end up in Vedāntic religion. Thus there is a fundamental religious impulse in all the systems of Vedānta. Things may appear dissimilar but one inner essence flows through all of them. It is this unity that makes social life lovable. It is an undeniable fact that man lives through society.

Further, religion is a relationship with the revealed. It is a relationship of man with God or the Highest Reality. When it is said that Vedānta is to be regarded as religion, it only means that, it is not mere ritualism or formalism. A man of religion must be above mechanical uttering and doing of *mantras*, *Vṛatas*, *Pūjas* and other rituals. The practice of Yoga enables one to progress spiritually. A Vedāntic religionist never imposes but appeals, to the lived genuine experience. He is the sage, the saint who sees the reality everywhere and in everything. He is a man of credibility who pardons all those who are lost in theoretical considerations.

Vedāntic religion is a great boon for our time and our needs indeed!

- Dr. V. N. Sheshgiri Rao
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(continued from last issue)

Eternity Compressed in Time :

My Reminiscences of Shri Gurudeva

Shri Gurudeva has till now discussed the difference between the two attitudes, the submissive and militant, which the seekers of God show in the pursuit of the spiritual goal. He now comes to the phenomenon of the Dark Night of the Soul, which characterises all seekers of God irrespective of their religion, race or community. Histories of mystical experience reveal how almost in every saint's life the darkest hour is nearest the dawn. 'The Ever-lasting Nay' seems the necessary preliminary to the 'Ever-lasting Yea'. The sick soul and the psychology of surrender are expressions with which we are familiar everywhere. Shri Gurudeva mentions as illustrations Bunyan and St. John from the western thought, and Ramanuja from the history of Indian Philosophy. Ramanuja shows a true attitude of surrender in his doctrine of 'Prapatti'. Dr. R. G. Bhandarkar, remarks Shri Gurudeva, going a step further used to say that he was not even a 'Prapanna', but only a 'Prapitsu', not one who has succeeded in surrendering himself, but one who was only desirous of surrender. Aurobindo Ghosh in recent times has revitalised the doctrine of self-surrender. (Pathway to God in Hindi Literature p. 216).

Surdas speaks of self-surrender in his poem 'सुना रे मैंने निर्बल के बल राम' Shri Gurudeva pin-points the essence of the poem when he says, "Unless we realise our absolute impotence before the majestic power of God, it may not be possible for God's grace to descend upon us. When the great elephant Gajendra was full of arrogance and power, and when he was on the point of being killed by the great alligator, he found that his own efforts were of no avail, and as soon as he began to utter the Name of God with full devotion, God came to his help when he had uttered the single syllable 'रा', before even he has uttered the full name 'राम'.. Similarly we are told that God came to the help of Draupadi and protected her against the wicked assaults of Duhshasan on her sacred honour. Surdas goes on to speak of four kinds of power that a man possesses, 'आत्मबल', 'तपोबल', 'बाहुबल' and 'धनबल'. But being a devotee, he does not think of any of these sources of strength. "To him, as compared to any of these sources of strength, a new one, namely 'कृपाबल' alone stands as the highest. It is the grace of God which supersedes any other source of strength which man may fondly cling to in his heart : "सूर किसोर कृपा से सब बल । हारे को हरि नाम ।।".

Shri Gurudeva also discusses two songs of Mirabai under the head of submissive attitude. In the first song 'तुम पलक उघारो दीनानाथ' she is imploring God to send down His grace upon her, "Those who were well-intentioned towards me," she says, "have now become my enemies. I have become an eyesore to everybody. I am being dried up while standing day and night. What burden of Mira could there be on Thee, Oh Lord of the universe?

It is like an ounce added to a hundred pounds of weight Thou has taken the burden of the whole universe, physical, moral and spiritual upon Thyself. Open Thy eyelashes, therefore, and look at me with Thy gracious vision". Mirabai is conscious of the fact that her Guru was a perfected saint who had reached the acme of spiritual experience, गुरु रैदास मिले पूरे'. She compliments herself upon being the recipient of his spiritual benediction. Having received this, she says, her head shone as if it was adorned with lotus, 'धुर से कमल भिडी'. Shri Gurudeva says that this expression 'धुर से कमल भिडी' might also mean that Mirabai regarded herself as fortunate that her thousand-petalled. Lotus (सहस्रार) had come into contact with God. This meaning also appears plausible in view of the fact that Mirabai's spiritual teacher Raidas belonged to the Kabirite School. Shri Gurudeva further remarks, ''If we understand the reading as 'कलम' instead of 'कमल', as is sometimes done, that would also give a very good interpretation. According to this interpretation, Mirabai thought herself fortunate that her spiritual instruction was ever grafted on her. Her own tree, which was of an inferior veriety, was by infusion made capable of yielding a rich and delicious harvest. The inferior tree, on which the branch of a superior one is grafted, yields thereby richer and more plentiful fruit. So did it happen in the case of Mirabai''.

Lastly in this song Mirabai gives expression to an utterance of great spiritual value. She says, ''When Raidas, my spiritual teacher, came and gave me a sign, my light was merged in the divine light''.

'सतगुरु सैन दई जब आके,
जोत में जोत मिली ।'

Explaining the meaning of 'सैन' (sign), Shri Gurudeva tells us that in the spiritual literature of Maharashtra and Karnatak it is customary to understand by this 'sign' either as a happy ensign or even a prognostication. In the present case, however, by word 'सैन' we might understand a happy ensign, which Mirabai's spiritual teacher gave her and by which her further spiritual progress became assured. There are many such signs spoken of in spiritual literature. They are forms of spiritual experience, which reveal themselves before the advancing mystic. Such ensigns we may find mentioned, for instance, in a famous passage in the Shetashvatara Upanishad, namely, 'नीहार धूमार्कानलानिलानां स्वद्योत विद्युत्स्फटिक शशिनाम्' or in the celebrated Abhanga of Jananeshvara which tells us : '' कापसाचे गोळे फिरती पोकळी । मोतियांची जाळी विखुरती ।

गरुडाच्या भरारी जाती दृष्टिपुढे । शेषाचें वेटाळे गुंडाळती ।।
वज्राचिंया चुरा शुभ्रवत दिसे । तयामाजी वस्तु शोभतसे ।।

Shri Gurudeva tells us in autobiographical vein, "These signs carry us gradually to higher and higher levels, until the way is opened for us, as Mirabai expresses it, for a union with God.

Finally, Shri Gurudeva discusses what he calls "a poem of remarkable value from Mirabai, in which there is an extraordinary mixture of music, rhetoric and mysticism. The poem concerned is 'जोगी मत जा, मत जा'. It is exceedingly popular chiefly because a great musician like Thakur Onkarnath set it to music of the highest order. It also expresses mystical experience, which is absolutely sui generis. Shri Gurudeva mentions a fact which has not been hitherto noticed, namely, this poem's value from the viewpoint of rhetoric science. It is one of the best specimens of poetical compositions from the point of view of rhetoric science, for it illustrates 'अलंकारध्वनि' in the form of 'उत्कर्ष' in a remarkable manner.

Analysing the poem, Shri Gurudeva says that Mirabai makes five requests to her Lord. She addresses him as Jogi. It is difficult to decide whether by Jogi she means her spiritual teacher Raidas or Lord Krishna himself. It has been supposed that Krishna had appeared once in the form of a Yogin to the Gopis. Whatever this might be, Mirabai implores the Lord firstly not to depart from her. We have no grounds to determine whether Mirabai was making a request to the physically present Lord or His mystical vision. She pathetically implores her Lord not to depart : 'जोगी मत जा, मत जा'. Secondly, she requests her Lord to take her by the hand to a by-lane which will lead her God-ward 'हम को गैल लगाजा'. Thirdly, if it may not be possible, she says, she may ascend a funeral pyre, and she requests her Lord to set fire to it with his own hand, and then go. Fourthly, when her body would be reduced to ashes in the funeral pyre, her Lord should come and besmear his body with her ashes. Finally, she would regard herself as most fortunate if the Lord deigns to merge her light in the light Divine : 'जोत में जोत मिला जा'.

Shri Gurudeva tells us that a consideration of all these five alternatives makes it clear that Mirabai requests her Lord to be in constant contact with her in some form or the other. There is clearly a gradation in the different alternatives, which she proposes. ''Physical presence of the Lord, taking her by the hand to lead her to a by-path, setting fire to her funeral pyre, besmearing his body with her ashes and finally the mergence of her light with the Divine light may easily be seen to be ascending rungs in the ladder of spiritual communion with the Divine. As seen above, this is an excellent illustration of what we might call 'उत्कर्षालंकार'. Shri Gurudeva here refers to what the rhetoricians calls the 'ध्वनि. ध्वनि' is of three kinds, 'अलंकार ध्वनि, वस्तु ध्वनि and रसध्वनि. Firstly, the poem of Mirabai contains 'अलंकार ध्वनि' in the form of 'उत्कर्ष', as explained above. Similarly, as her spiritual teacher is the single focus of Mirabai's attention throughout all her demands, as he is in fact the very alpha and the omega of her existence, this might be taken to be a superb specimen of 'वस्तुध्वनि'.

Finally, we find in the poem a very notable illustration of 'करूणरस'. Mirabai is weeping, she offers to ascend the funeral pyre, is prepared to have her body reduced to ashes provided her Lord besmears his body with them; all these are full of the highest kind of 'करूणा' or pathos. There could be no better example of the combination of 'अलंकार ध्वनि, वस्तुध्वनि' and 'रसध्वनि' than this sublime poem of Mirabai. (Ibid. pp. 223-24)

(To be continued)

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Hypnosis and Mystical Experiences

In recent years, a keen interest is being shown in an exiciting, elusive and subtle topic - the relationship of hypnosis to mystical/spiritual experiences by quite a few highly educated ones, and such scholars can be conveniently grouped under three main categories. Those people who belong to the first category strongly adhere to the stand that mystical experiences might be the outcome of illusion or self-hyponsis[1] and that rational mysticism is a myth (*vide* for details Dabade 1998:149). In the next category, one comes across people who do not know in clear cut terms the differences if any between hypnosis and mystical experiences but would like to seek clarification from those who can throw some light on this topic. Those who know that hypnosis and mystical experiences are distinctly different subscribe to the last category (*vide* for details Sangoram and Deshpande 1978:251-52) and the people of this category admonish that all that glitters is not gold. Keeping in mind the scholars of the second category rather than those of the remaining ones, this article makes an attempt to bring to light whether there are really any sharp differences between hypnosis and mystical experiences or not.

In view of the above it becomes imperative to present at the very outset a brief account of the fundamentals of hypnosis and mystical experiences.

Etymologically speaking the term 'hypnosis' is derived from the Greek word *hypnos,* which means sleep. The hypnotic state, however, actually lies somewhere between being awake and asleep.

The hypnotic appears to heed only the communications of the hypnotist. He seems to respond in an uncritical manner, ignoring all aspects of the environment other than those pointed out to him by the hypnotist. He sees, hears, smells, feels, and otherwise perceives in accordance with the hypnotist's suggestions[2] eventhough these suggestions may be in apparent contradiction to the stimuli the impinge upon him. Even the subject's memory and awareness or self may be altered by suggestion, and the effects of suggestions may be extended (posthypnotically) into the subject's subsequent waking activity (*vide* The New Encyclopaedia Britannica 2002:203).

The history of hypnosis is as ancient as that of sorcery, magic, and medicine to whose methods it belonged. Its scientistic history began in the latter part of the 18th Century with Franz Mesmer, a Viennese physician who used it in the treatment of patients (The New Encyclopaedia Britannica 2002:203).

Hypnosis has been officially endorsed as a therapeutic method by medical, psychiatric, dental and psychological associations throughout the world. It has been found most useful in preparing people for anesthesia, enhancing the drug response, and reducing the required dosage (*Vide* for details The New Encyclopaedia Britannica 2002:204). In other words, hypnotherapy is the practice of hypnotizing people in order to help them with a mental or physical problem, for example, to help them give up smoking (Collins Cobuild Dictionary for Advanced Learners 2001:770) and intoxicating drinks and drugs etc. But unfortunately the cure that results from hypnotism does not last longer.

It is a very grave matter, whether cures that result by hypnotic measures are of short duration or not to entrust ourselves over to a hypnotist, even if we trust him. The hypnotics come under the will and bidding of the hypnotist. The hypnotics' will is essentially neutralized and can be suggested to believe and do whatever (good or evil) as asked by the hypnotist. The hypnotics' control subjugated to the will of the hypnotist can affect the body as well as the mind. Putting ourselves in a hypnotic state is yielding ourselves to a vulnerable position. In this connection, Prof. R.D. Ranade states, ''Hypnotism is dangerous both to the hypnotist ... [and] to his subject. The hypnotic loses his independent individuality, the awareness of which becomes a source of life long misery to him. The consciousness as well as the actual state of one's being under the sway of another person, is fraught with greater danger. Such a person is always haunted with fear. It is a sort of destruction of the physical mind itself ... The 'subject' entirely looses his individual self[3]. (*Vide* Sangoram and Deshpande 1978:251-52).

Hypnosis has been repeatedly condemned by various medical associations when it is used purely for purposes of public entertainment, owing to the danger of persons suffering adverse psycohypnotic reactions to the procedure. Indeed, in this regard, several nations have banned or limited commercial or other public displays of hypnosis on such grounds (The New Encyclopaedia Britannica 2002:204). Some experts recommend that the practice of hypnotizing people should be taken up by only qualified professionals. The fact is nobody knows exactly how hypnosis actually ''works''. Though hypnotists may have intentions of using it for good it is still an unexplored realm that can affect the mind and the body.

Hitherto, I have dealt with some basics of hypnosis. Now the attention may be focused on the various elements, features and criteria of mystical experiences such as intuition, central initiation, supersensousness, ubiquity, continuity and growth, *Pratyaksha,* coherence, correspondence and beatificism. A few words may be added in the end about the presence of mysical experiences in different states of mind and the place of purification of the mind in mystical pursuit.

According to mystics ... intuition is a faculty of supersensous experience which is aroused by proper spiritual initiation and practice. Physiologically, ... the faculty of intuition is concerned with ... central instead of peripheral initiation. It is not the external or outside sense-experience that counts; it is the experience that is generated inside in us in our intuitional process, that is, in the process of following the path of God, that matters. So intuition is something which transcends intellect, feeling and will[4]. It has got a physiological support in what purports to be central initiation[5]. Thus there is an element of supersensousness in this intuitional experience because a blind man is able to see, a deaf man is able to hear and a lame man is able to go in pursuit (Ranade 1960:2-3).

As regards the metaphysical aspect, it is argued that anything to be real must be necessary, objective and universal.

Coming to the element of necessity in the experience, Prof. Ranade states that if we follow a definite path, it will lead to necessary consequences, therefore, if we follow the spiritual path its necessary effect, namely, spiritual experience will be a logical consequence (Kulkarni 1974:70-71).

William James - an eminent psychologist in his monumental work, *Varieties of Religious Experience,* has tried to collect and present these [mystical] experiences. When these experiences are put together, we find a striking similarity in them (Ranade 1960:4-5). The university of experience found among mystics makes these experiences objectively valid (Kulkarni 1974:71).

Among the psychological characteristics, special mention may be made of continuity[6]. Spiritual experience must not be discontinuous. If it comes once in a while and leaves you off, and if you do not get it again and again it is no spiritual experience at all. The continuity is also attended by the process of growth (Ranade 1960:3). God-realization is not an event but a process; it is a progressive realisation.

The Indian and Western philosophers have discussed the *pramanas* or criteria for valid knowledge. Prof. Ranade sees eye to eye with the view that *Pratyaksha,* not in its ordinary sense, but *Pratyaksha* in the sense of *Aparokshanubhuti* or *Anubhava,* i.e., intuitive experience attained in the state of the worshipful contemplation of God, is the only true *Pramana* of the valid knowledge of Reality. As in this state there is a direct approach to Reality, there is therefore, no necessity of an intermediate criterion at all. Thus, *Anubhava* is the only true *Pramana* (*Vide* Sangoram and Deshpande 1980:iv-v).

Further, Prof. Ranade expresses his views on Western criteria of 'Correspondence', 'Satisfaction', 'Coherence' as propounded by the Realists, the Pragmatists, the Idealists respectively.

In mystical experience there is an element of 'Correspondence' between the internal perception and the external perception. As regards 'Satisfaction' the Mystical experience confers upon the mystic beatification, which carries complete satisfaction in him, as a result of the beatific vision of God. Thus the pragmatist's criterion has also got a place in mystical experience. As regards 'coherence' it is pointed out that ''epistemologically'', absolute coherence is not knowable, as the knower will remain outside the coherent system. But if coherence rises to the level of transparent coherence, where the knower, knowledge, and the known become one, then it is nothing else than *'Anubhava'.* Thus, *'Anubhava'* remains the only criterion, which combines in itself elements of correspondence, utility or satisfaction and coherence[7], all in their purified form (*Vide* Sangoram and Deshpande 1980:v).

According to Prof. Ranade to get the perception of God in the स्वप्नयोग (in the state of dream) is difficult, but not impossible; in the सुषुप्तयोग (in the state of deep sleep), it becomes a contradiction in terms; and in the जाग्रतियोग (in the state of normal consciousness) and (Superconsciousness), it is analogous and तुर्या real (*Vide* Ranade 1997:247-50).

A person whose mind is absorbed in senses cannot concentrate on God and whose mind is absorbed in God cannot pay attention to senses. Moral preparation is absolutely necessary not only to enter into spiritual life but also for developing it and ultimately for making oneself perfect in it (Kulkarni 1974:110). Thus, moral purity is a *sine qua non* of spiritual life.

Needless to say here that the above description enables one considerably if not wholly to differentiate hypnosis from mystical experiences.

Hypnosis has a short history but a long past in the sense that a study of hypnosis is being made on scientific lines only recently but its practice dates back to ancient times. On the contrary mytical experiences are eternal and universal. The mystical classics have neither birthday nor native land - William James[8].

The methods and techniques that are used in hypnosis resemble those of magic, sorcery, and medicine but the easiest method that is followed in attaining spiritual experiences is undoubtedly uttering Divine Name with utmost devotion and pure mind and all other techniques that are conducive to it such as living in the company of spiritual minded people, the *yogic* exercises, offering prayers. Neither central initiation nor moral preparation is needed to enter into a hypnotic state. No entry into the Divine Kingdom of Ends is possible without adequate moral preparation and proper central initiation.

In mystical endeavour there is an exercise of intellect, feeling and will backed by intuition. But there is no need for this kind of exercise in hypnosis as highly suggestible persons can be easily hypnotized.

Hypnotism may be used as a means to an end and the cure that is outcome of hypnosis if any is of short duration. besides the hypnotic power diminishes by its use. In contrast, mystical experiences can be stabilized. Mystical life is viewed not as a means to an end but as an end in itself. Mystical experience are full of bliss and evergrowing and they make mind more and more pure and powerful. Great mystics like the saint of Umadi used to say that after performing meditation they felt as if they had taken bath afresh or drunk half a *ser* of milk.

As noted earlier the hypnotic state lies somewhere between being awake and asleep. However, one can have mystical experiences even in the state of dream though rarely, one can have mystical experiences in conscious and superconscious states. A state of superconsciousness *(Unamani* or *Turya)* reminds the experience of 'trance' enjoyed by great mystics from time to time. But the experience of 'trance' illustrated by the hypnotic conditions may take one to the dangerous zone and this is where real and permanent damage can occur. 'Trance' in this case is a condition of dissociation characterised by a lack of voluntary movement, and frequently by automatisms in act and thought.

On account of hypnotism the ''Subject'' may lose his individual self. But in deep mystical experience knower, known and knowledge become one.

The hypnotic is haunted with some kind of phobia. In mystical experience, the element of beatificism is invariably there. On some occasions there can be blending of emotions of fear, awe, reverence and joy in mystical experiences.

The working of hypnosis is not yet much understood.

However, to judge the validity of mystical experiences one can apply criteria such as *Anubhava,* correspondence, satisfaction, coherence.

Thus, it becomes obvious that as there are certain vital difference between hypnosis and mystical experiences, one is not to be mistaken for the other and at the same time it is to be understood that one is not the consequential of the other.

Notes :

1) Hypnotizing oneself is self-hypnosis or autohypnosis. Autohypnosis can be occultic and just as dangerous as a trance induced by a hypnotist.

2) An uncritical acceptance of idea is suggestion. An extent to which an individual accepts or absorbs suggestions is suggestibility and the same can be expressed in terms of the following formula.

$$\text{Suggestibility} = \frac{\text{No. of suggestions accepted}}{\text{No. of suggestions in all}} \times 100$$

A combination of drug, pain and hypnosis can implant suggestions that will last for years and make a person perform any act that may have been against his will previously.

3) Prof. Ranade explains one incidence of hypnosis which he observed as follows :

"I once happened to ask ... a hypnotic : How many persons are there in this hall ? He answered : "Fifteen". I once again asked : "Including yourself or excluding yourself?" He answered : "I cannot say". This means that the "subject" entirely loses his individual self" (*Vide* Sangoram, Deshpande 1978:251-52)

4) It is very often supposed that for mystical experience no separate faculty like intuition need be requisitioned, but that intellect, feeling and will might suffice, to have a full experience of God. Now, it is a matter of common knowledge that even for heights to be reached in artistic, scientific or poetic activity, a certain amount of direct, immediate, intuititive contact with Reality is required. Far more is this the case, in the matter of mystical experience. ... Intuition, far from contradicting intelligence, feeling or will does penetrate and lie at the back of them all. Intuition would not deny to mysticism, a title to philosophy if intellect* requires it. As it cannotes a determinative effort towards the acquisition of Reality, it implies a definite, prolonged and continuous exercise of will. As feeling brings the subject and the object into more intimate contact, than any other psychological process, it has become a vital part of the process of realisation. Thus, it seems that intelligence, will and feeling are necessary in the case of mystical endeavour. Only intuition

must back them all (Ranade 1960:6-7)

*By undertaking a rational analysis of mystical experience, reason tries to isolate the unnamed something in it, something which does not respond to the call of reason. But this isolation itself is very important; it makes us aware that beyond the sphere of reason there is a vast arena, by no means untrodden but where reason is forbidden to enter and where intuition is the only guide. Reason in this sense receives illumination in the form of saving experiences. Intuition has come to fulfil and not to destroy reason (*Vide* Sangoram and Deshpande 1980:71).

5) An understanding of physiological support in central initiation depends upon the knowledge of apperception and its related concepts like perception and sensation.

Sensation is bare awareness of its object. Perception is the awareness of its object as this or that. In simple terms, sensation stands for mere acquaintance of its object but perception is knowledge of it*. If sensation is presentative, perception is both presentative and representative. Sensation is not organized but perception is organized. Sensation is simple, while perception is complex. Finally, if sensation is passive, perception is active. Notwithstanding the differences between sensation and perception, one cannot have the separate experience of sensation and perception.

A brief explanation may now be given with regards to perception and apperception. The eye only sees but does not hear. One sense organ does not communicate with the other. But in supersensous experience there is intercommunicativeness. The eye is able not only to see, but also to hear, smell and so on. So with the other senses. It means that any organ does the work of any other sense organ**. This is suggested by *Purandaradasa.* This can be explained only when we cease to talk about perception and talk about apperception. Perception is a function of sense organs, apperception is the function of the brain. Prception is peripheral, apperception is central. This is the physiological expression of the synthetic unity of apperception (*Vide* Kulkarni 1974:68-69).

* One may see a green spot on the branch of a tree, but it becomes a perception only when he interprets it as a feather of a parrot.

** I heard flowers that sounded, and saw notes that shone - Saint Martin.

6) The revelation of *Vishwarupa* by Lord Krishna to Arjuna, and the revelation of a similar kind of experience by Sri Ramkrishna Paramahamsa to Narendra (Swami Vivekananda) could give the impression that the mystical experiences are instantaneous. But a careful analysis suggests that such mystical experiences are to be stabilized in the course by stupendons spiritual efforts and grace or they are the fruits

of previous spiritual merits. Further it may be noted that spiritual experiences are imperishable. As the *Bhagavadgita* puts it "Weapons cleave It not, fire burns It not, water drenches It not".

7) The mystical experience includes an element of 'coherence'. "Proportion, symmetry and harmony are the essential features of the form and experience of God" (Kulkarni 1974:75).

8) All mystics speak the same language for they come from the same country - Saint Martin.

When a philosopher talks about a spiritual experience he is neither a Hindu, nor a Muslim, nor a Christian. He is a citizen of world and for the matter of that, a citizen of the spiritual world' - Prof. R.D. Ranade.

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Sadhaka's Question : What is the difference between hypnotism and spiritual experience ?

Gurudev replied : Hypnotism is harmful to both the parties. The person on whom the experiment is made loses his independence and mental power of the person who hypnotises suffers a loss. On the contrary spiritual experience is blissful, is ever on the increase and confers mental strength. Continuity, universality and bliss are its criteria. The power of the hypnotiser lessens by and by but the spiritual power increases by experience.

Rāmagītā

The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki is well-known. It narrates the life-story of Rāma the son of Daśaratha the king of Ayodhyā. Besides this, there are in Sanskrit some other Rāmāyaṇas among which there is Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa. In this Adhyātma Rāmayaṇa it is said that the god Viṣṇu adopts the incarnation of Rāma in order to kill Rāvaṇa the king of demons. At the same time Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa insists that Rāma is the Supreme Godhead, the ultimate reality both qualified and qualityless, and that his activities in this world are mere sports (līla).

Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa is narrated by Lord Śaṅkara to his wife Pārvatī. It is divided into seven parts called Kāṇḍas the last of which is named Uttara Kāṇḍa. The fifth section (Sarga) of Uttara Kāṇḍa is Rāmagītā consisting of sixty-two stanzas.

Rāmagītā is so-called because it is sung by Rāma, at the request of his younger brother Lakṣmaṇa, after Rāma was coronated as the king of Ayodhyā. Lakṣmaṇa wanted to know as to how he can cross the ocean in the form of empirical life in this world (bhara). Then Rāma tells him :-

Empirical life in this world is nothing but a cycle of births and rebirths; it is due to actions (karma); but its ultimate cause is Nescience which cannot be destroyed by actions. Nescience can be destroyed by knowledge alone to secure which a spiritual aspirant has to possess certain requisites and has to approach a spiritual preceptor. The knowledge is of the identity of the individual self and the

Highest Self the ultimate reality, to be known from the Upaniṣadic sentence 'Thou art that' (Tat tvamasi). The empirical Life in this world which is superimposed on the Supreme Self is false. This supreme reality is different from the limiting adjuncts (upādhi) of three bodies, three states of human life like waking etc. and the five sheaths (kośa), and is to be realised in Nirvikalpa Samādhi prior to which the upāsanā of Onkāra is needed. After realisation of the Highest Self, a man becomes free in this life (jīvanmukta), and after death he becomes merged in the Supreme Self which is nothing but Rāma devotion to whom can lead to this identity.

From the above-mentioned[1] contents of Rāmagīta it is quite clear that Rāmagītā is profoundly influenced by the philosophy of Monism-alone (Kevalādvaita) of the school of first Śankarācārya. The following matters show the influence of Monism-alone (for which sometimes statements from works in Monism-alone are quoted).

1) Action does[2] not destroy Nescience (St. 9-10).

2) The combination of action and knowledge does not lead to Salvation (St. 16).

3) Knowledge[3] alone destroys Nescience (St. 9, 15).

4) The world is superimposed on the highest Self (adhyasa) (st. 36); the illustration of rope-snake is given (St. 37) and the world is declared to be false (St. 57).

5) The words "pañcīkṛta" and "apañcīkṛta" (St. 28-29) indicate the[7] process of Five fold combination (pañcīkaraṇa).

6) The individual self is identical with Supreme Self for Supreme Reality (St. 47).

7) The sentence 'Thou art that' is to be interpreted with the help of Bhāgaluksạṇā (St. 24-27).

8) There are Upadhis[10] of three bodies for the self (St. 28-30).

9) Description of the gross body (St. 28), of the subtle body

(St. 29), and of the causal body (St. 30) are the same as in Monism[11]-alone.

10) Self is different from the upādhis[12] of these three bodies (St. 30)

11) The[13] self appears like the Kośas (St. 31)

12) There is mutual superimposition of consciousness of Self and[14] non-conscious things (St. 41).

13) Individual soul (jīva) is a reflection of the consciousness[15] in intellect (St. 40).

Another point in connection with Rāmagītā is this :- The teaching of Rāmagītā is based on śruti/veda. In Rāmagītā itself it is said that what Rāma tells is ''special knowledge propounded by Śruti (St. 6). Rāma himself says that he has told ''special knowledge which is the essence of Sruti'' (St. 62), or ''secret knowledge which is quintessence of what śruti says'' (St. 59). This means that Rāma's instructions are based on Śruti. By the word 'Śruti' here we have to understand the concluding portions of Śruti namely Upaniṣads which deal with ultimate reality. This is mostly correct in view of the following :-

1) The doctrine that the birth and rebirth are due to actions is mentioned in Upaniṣads.

2) The description of Ātman/Brahman and its realisation (Sākṣātkāra) are found in the Upaniṣads.

3) The doctrine of devotion (bhakti) is traced to Ṛgveda. The upaniṣads Kaṭha and Śvetāśvatara have mentioned bhakti.

4) Upaniṣadic sentences like ''Neti'' (St. 17), ''Tattvamasi'' (St. 24) and ''Etarad'' (St.21) are directly mentioned, while a sentence from Taittiriya branch of Śruti is referred to.

Moreover it is to be noted that as Rāmagītā is fully influenced by the school of Monism-alone, it is but natural that Rāmagītā presumes these Upaniṣadic portions used by

Monism-alone.

In view of the above it can be said that the teaching of Rāmagītā is based on Śruti i.e. Upaniṣads.

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After this general view of Rāmagītā, now is given the Sanskrit text of Rāmagītā followed by Translation and explanation.

Rāmagītā : Test, translation and explanation :

श्री महादेव उवाच :

ततो जगन्मंगल मंगलात्मना
विधाय रामा यणकीर्ति मुत्तमाम् ।
चार पूर्वाचरितं रघुत्तमो
राजर्षिवर्यैरभिसेवितं यथा ॥१॥

Śrī Mahādeva Spoke :

(O, Pārvatī), then after establishing his most excellent fame in (the form of) Rāmāyaṇa, by means of his auspicious body (mangalātmanā) assumed for the welfare of the world, Raghūttama (=Rāma) started to perform his actions like those performed by the former best sage-like kings(1).

Explanation :- The entire Adhyatma Ramayana is said to be narrated by Lord Śaṅkara to his wife Pārvatī. Hence the words - '' Srī Mahādeva spoke''.

Throughout the Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa and Rāmagītā, Rāma is looked upon as the Highest God who is both qualified (Saguṇa) and qualityless (nirguṇa). (See stanza No. 61). The body of Rama is holy and auspicious. Actions which Rāma performs with his body work out the good or welfare (mangala) of the world.

The word ''Rāmāyaṇa-Kīrti'' can also be taken to mean fame (of Rāma) described in Rāmāyaṇa.

The word ''Raghūttama'' stands for Rāma. Raghu was one of the ancestors of Rāma. Yet the word Raghu is often taken to mean the dynasty of Raghu. As Rāma was the best descendant in the family of Raghu, he is called here Raghūttama.

The word "Rājarṣi" means a sage-like king. A sage performs penances and collects religious merit (puṇya). A king properly performing his royal duties is said to perform penances and to collect religious merit.

Here the word rājarṣi can refer to former sage-like kings in Raghu's family or sage-like kings in general.

●●●

Rāma's younger brother was Lakṣmaṇa who used to talk with Rāma and used to ask him certain things. Then -

(2)

सौमित्रिणा पृष्ट उदारबुद्धिना
रामः कथाः प्राह पुरातनीः शुभाः ।
राज्ञः प्रमत्तस्य नृगस्य शापतो ।
द्विजस्य तिर्यक्तवमथाह राघवः ॥२॥

Rāghava (=Rāma) narrated ancient holy tales, whenever he was asked by Lakṣmaṇa of noble intellect. (For instance once) Rama told the story of king Nṛga who (once) committed careless/negligent act and who (in consequence) had to assume the body of a lower creature, on account of the curse of a Brahmin(2).

Explanation :- The word "Saumitri" means the son of Sumitrā. Sumitrā was one of the wives of king Daśaratha. Lakṣmaṇa was the son of Sumitrā.

The story of king Nṛga is briefly thus :- Nṛga was a king who used to bestow cows on Brahmins. Once he knowingly or un-knowingly committed something wrong with the gift of a cow. So he was cursed by a Brahmin to be born as a lower creature. Consequently Nṛga became a lower creature.

The word "Rāghava" means a descendent of Raghu in general. But by usage the word is often used to denote Rāma only.

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The next verse No. 3 states that once Lakṣmaṇa approched Rāma, with a definite purpose in his mind.

(3)

कदाचिदेकान्त उपस्थितं प्रभुं
रामं रमा - ललित-पाद-पंकजम् ।
सौमित्रिरासादिन - शुद्ध-भावन:
प्रणम्य भक्त्या विनयान्वितोऽब्रवीत् ॥३॥

Once the Lord Rāma whose lotus-like feet were served by Ramā (=Lakṣmī) was sitting in a lonely place. (At that time) Lakṣmaṇa who had acquired pure thoughts (i.e. mind) (approached Rāma) devoutly saluted him and with meekness he spoke to him (3)

Explanation :- Ramā is a name of Lakṣmī the wife of the god Viṣṇu. She is represented by the Purāṇas as serving her husband. Rāma is Viṣṇu according to the Adhyātma Rāmayaṇa. So here it is said that Ramā was serving/pressing the feet of Rāma.

In Rāmagītā, the words mind and intellect are used promiscuosly. So often the word 'buddhi' stands for mind-intellect-complex.

Here Lakṣmaṇa approaches Rāma as a teacher, in order to receive knowledge useful to cross the ocean in the form of empirical life (See Stanza No. 5). Now, knowledge, says Bhagavadgītā, is secured from a Teacher, by means of salutation, questions and service (sevā). Lakṣmaṇa has got these three means. He has serviced Rāma, when both of them were in the forest. Now he is saluting (praṇipāta) Rāma, is showing his devotion, and is putting a question (paripraśna). Thus he is fit to receive knowledge.

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Lakṣmaṇa is fully aware that Rāma is the Highest God. So Lakṣmaṇa first praises Rāma as Supreme God in the following verse No. 4.

(4)

त्वं शुद्धबोधोऽसि हि सर्वदेहिना -
मात्मास्यधीशोऽसि निराकृतिः स्वयम् ।
प्रतीयसे ज्ञानदशां महामते
पादाब्ज - भृंगाहित - संग - संगिताम्· ॥४॥

O you of great intellect, you are (of the nature of) pure knowledge. You are the self of all embodied beings. You are the controlling lord (of all). You by yourself are formless (nirākṛti). You are known (and experienced) by those persons who have the vision of knowledge and who are attached to those (devotees of yours) who like bees are in contact with lotuses in the form of your feet (4).

Explanation :- In Rāmagītā, Rāma the Supreme God is both qualified and qualityless (See Verse No. 61). As the qualified (saguṇa) real, Rāma is the controller of all. The word ''nirākṛti'' shows by upalakṣaṇa Rama's qualityless nature.

In the doctrine of devotion (bhakti), contact with god's devotees (or with good men) (satsanga) is insisted upon.

●●●

In the next verse No. five, Lakṣmaṇa points out his special purpose in approaching Rāma.

(5)

अहं प्रपन्नोऽस्मि पदांबुजं प्रभो
भवापवर्गं तव योगि - भावितम् ।
यथांजसाज्ञानमपार - वारिधिं
सुखं तरिष्यामि तथानुशाधि माम् ॥५॥

O Lord, I have surrendered myself to your lotus - like feet which release (men) from their empirical life (consisting in birth and rebirth) and which are mediated upon by the practitioners of (Bhakti) yoga. Please instruct me in such a way that I may easily and comfortably cross the limitless ocean in the form of ignorance (5).

Explanation :- The word ''apavarga'' here in the compound 'bhavāpavarga' means destroyer or remover, and not salvation.

Bhava is empirical life in this world, consisting in the cycle of action - birth - death - rebirth.

The word 'yogi' in 'yogi-bhāvita' obviously means a bhakta-yogin, a practitioner of devotion.

The word 'añjasājnānam' can be taken as 'añjasi jnānam', and as 'añjāsa ajnānam'. In the first case, the meaning would be :- jñanā (knowledge) which is extensive like limitless ocean. In the second case, the meaning would be :- ajñāna (ignorance/nescience) is extensive like limitless sea. This latter meaning is adopted in the translation, as it is in consonance with what is said in the next verse No. 6.

(6)

श्रुत्वाथ सौमित्रि वचोडखिलं तदा
प्राह प्रपन्नार्ति हरः प्रसन्नधीः ।
विज्ञानमज्ञान-तमः - प्रशांतये
श्रुति-प्रपन्नं क्षितिपाल-भूषणः ॥६॥

Then after hearing that complete speech of Lakṣmaṇa, Rāma who removed the sorrows of those who surrender to him was pleased in his mind. Then Rāma (the crest-) ornament to other kings described the knowledge propounded by Śruti, in order to destroy the darkness in the form of ignorance (6).

Explanation :- The words intellect and mind are employed promiscuously in this Rāmagītā. Here the word 'dhī' in prasanna-dhī means mind.

The word 'vijnāna' stands for special knowledge. It is not empirical knowledge. It is the knowledge of the ultimate reality - call it Ātmā, Paramātma, Brahman or Rāma. This knowledge is efficacious to remove ignorance or Nescience (ajnāna) of the ultimate reality. Ajnāna is usually compared to darkness.

The knowledge of the Self is here said to be propounded by Śruti i.e. Veda. Vedas are the sacred books of Aryans. Upaniṣads the concluding portions of the vedas specially expound the ultimate reality.

The word "śruti-prapanna" can be taken to qualify Lakṣmaṇa who had approached Rāma (prapanna) to hear (śruti) about the knowledge.

(To be continued...)

- Prof. Dr. K.V. Apte

Sangli

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Do not be after social reforms like superficial improvements of villages and waste your time in it. Engage yourself in spiritual life and meditation. All undertakings, social or political, will succeed only when they are backed up by the presence of God. God as if gives you a blank cheque. Some people raise an objection that saints are of no use to the society as they while away their time in meditation in solitary places. But the objection is baseless. The realisers of God proclaim Him to the whole world. The saints lead then (with whomsoever they come in contact) to the spiritual path which alone can bestow the supreme benefaction on man. Therein lies their utility to the society.

- Gurudeo Ranade

A Prayer

श्लोकाः

याचेऽहं करूणासिन्धो यावज्जीवमिदं तव ।
अदैन्यं देहदार्ढ्यं च त्वत्पादांबुजसद्रतिम् ॥१॥
अनाद्यनन्तकालेषु भृत्योऽहं त्वं हि मे प्रभुः ।
त्वं तुष्टो वाऽथ रुष्टो वा त्वां विना मे गतिर्नहि ॥२॥
तुष्टोऽसि त्वं दयासिन्धो किमन्यैर्मम रक्षणे ।
रुष्टोऽसि त्वं दयासिन्धो किमन्यैर्मम रक्षणे ॥३॥
दोषाणां च सहिष्णुत्वे त्वत्समो नास्ति भूतले ।
मत्समो न हि देवेश कृतघ्नो वञ्चकोऽपि वा ॥४॥
ईशस्याखिलवीर्यस्य किमसाध्यं वदाच्युत ।
ममैष्टं च कियन्मात्रं किमेतावद्विलम्बनम् ॥५॥
जगत्स्वामी कृपापूर्णः सम्भवेन्निर्दयापरः ।
का तदा गतिरस्माकं गरदायां स्वमातरि ॥६॥
त्वमेवैको जगत्राता दाता ज्ञाता दयान्वितः ।
त्वां विना कः पुमान् कर्ता ह्यस्माकं तु मनोरथम् ॥७॥
आर्तबन्धुरिति ज्ञात्वा त्वामहं शरणं गतः ।
रक्षमामथवा सम्यक् त्वं यशो मुञ्च शाश्वतम् ॥८॥
दीनबन्धो दयासिन्धो सहृद्बन्धो जगत्पते ।
संसारार्णवमग्नं मां कारूण्येश समुद्धर ॥९॥
निर्गुणेष्वपि सत्त्वेषु दयां कुर्वन्ति साधवः ।
नहि संहरते ज्योत्स्नां चंद्रश्चाण्डालवेश्मनि ॥१०॥
प्रसीद मे श्रियः कान्त सुप्रसिद दयानिधे ।
पुनः पुनः प्रसीद त्वं प्रसीद वरदो भव ॥११॥

O Lord, the Ocean of mercy
Beseech I Thy favour as long as I live;
Sans humbleness bestow strength to my body
And let me be for ever at the aegis of Thy lotus-feet;
O Lord, the Ocean of mercy.
My Lord art Thou since time immemorial,
And I'am but the servant of Thine;
Whether pleased or annoyed art thou,
None else have I to look for succour but Thou,
O Lord, the Ocean of mercy.

If only art Thou merciful at me
Scarcely need I any care from any one;
But should'st thou get wanton at me
What support can I expect from other O Lord !
O Lord, the Ocean of mercy.

Who among those who've put up with our pranks
Is equal to Thee O Lord of the Lords ?
Nowhere else can'st Thou find an inglorious,
Ungrateful cheat like me O Lord !
O Lord, the ocean of mercy.

O *Achutha,* the Omnipotent, is't there anything
That's unattainable and impossible to Thee ?
Why then does't Thou delay in fructifying
The infinitesmal speck of wish of mine ?
O Lord, the Ocean of mercy.

Should'st Thou being the Lord of the Cosmos,
The compassionate one, cometh to be so hard;
Should'st the mother, herself to her progeny feed poison,
What would be the plight of us all, O Lord !
O Lord, the Ocean of mercy.

The protector art Thou, always benevolent,
The omniscient and the infinite treasure of mercy;
Who else can'st other than Thee
Take care to fulfil our wishes O Lord ?
O Lord, the ocean of mercy.

That kinsman art Thou of the miserable ones,
I Have come to Thee with supplication;
Either lift me from my present plight
Or cast away for every Thy glory and renown !
O Lord, the ocean of mercy.

O beloved of the humble-ones, the very source of mercy
The dear-one of the good-ones, the master of the universe,
Isha, the truthful one, redeem me at once
From the ocean of this worldly life;
O Lord, the Ocean of mercy.

Just as the moon yields indiscriminately
His light even to the house of *chandals,*
The savants invariably with compassion
Forgive the sins of catiffs O Lord !
O Lord, the Ocean of mercy.

I beg Thee to vouchsafe on me O *Lakshmikanta,*
The Ocean of mercy,
Bless me untiringly and grant me boons
Again and again and again, O Lord !
O Lord, the ocean of mercy.

Transcreated by :
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The Ethical Religion of Sri Visnu Purana

The Puranas may be regarded as the scripture of popular Hinduism. They are called *smrti* literature as against *sruti,* which are non authored *(apauruseya).*

The *Puranas* are the means of imparting moral, religious and spiritual teaching. They embody the fundamentals of Hindu philosophy religion, ethics and culture. They are recited partly for religious instruction and partly for entertainment. They are complex, colourful and compelling. They form a delightful book of infinite variety of stories, which are full of moral principles and concepts. Electrifying things happen in them. Gods and goddesses there, engage themselves in defining the good. Many model lessons for life can be deciphered from the incidents and characters as depicted in the *puranas.* They are a record of the religious beliefs of the Hindus, and their outlook upon life and the world. In this they are regarded as complementary to the *Itihasas* viz the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata,* which are also more often addressed as *Mahakavyas.* The *puranas* have mass appeal.

The *Puranas* encompass very vast literature. Indian art and architecture owe their conceptual development to the *Puranic* literature. For their themes, the poets, the playrights and the novelists have derived inspiration from the *puranas.*

The word *Purana* means 'old' or 'ancient' or 'the old text'. They contain the old traditions and histories. *Puranas* though meaning 'old', bristle with a sense of novelty. That is, the contents though old, bubble with fresh and *de nova* things.

This is made clear by Sri Samkara in his commentary on the Bhagavad-gita.

The *Puranas* are the sources of Dharma. They are the so called dharmic consultants (like the medical consultants, engineering consultants etc.) They guide people in religious duties, rites, Ceremonies, modes of worship, virtues, sins and atonements, pilgrimages. They are the indicators of the Hindu belief and conduct. They are known for the simplicity of their style. They are devotion-oriented.

There are eighteen/major puranas and an equal *number* of *Upapuranas. Brahma Purana,* padma, visnu, siva, Bhagavata, Agni, Bhavisya, Linga, Varaha, Skanda, Vayu, Kurma, Matsya, Garuda, Brahmanda etc., are some of the major *Puranas.* It is widely held that sage Vyasa compiled the *Puranas.*

(2)

Regarding the date of the *Puranas,* there are divergent opinions often opposed to each other. One opinion is that, *Puranas* belong to Pre-Christian era. The other opinion is that they are Post-Christian. Any way, the general view held by scholars is that *Puranas* are more than 3000 years old.

Now a relevant question may be asked as to why our ancient seers might have felt the necessity of preaching the *Puranas.* It is not difficult to find the answer. Vedas are generally abtruse and are written in a difficult style. The Philosophic truths, which the Vedas embody are too abstract to be understood by the common-folk. Hence the highest truths enshrined in the Vedas would simply lie dormant and obscure. It would carry the impression that the Vedic truths are meant only for the learned (*Panditah)* and not for the common man (*pamara*). The seers were quick enough to realise this and started teaching the abstract Vedic truths with the help of concrete examples, stories, myths, analogies, allegories, legends and pictorial illustrations. They went in search of a sweet coating through which, Philosophic truths, however abstract and abtruse, would be cleverly and easily taught, with much impact and cumulative effect. This sweet coating or concrete medium may be called the *Puranas.* The Puranas are the supplementary texts which interpret with ease, the essence of the *Vedas, dharma-sutras* and *dharma-sastras,* through examples taken from daily life. In the words of K.S. Ramaswamy Sastri "......... They (i.e. the Puranas) clothe with flesh and blood, the bony frame work of *Dharma-sutras* and *Dharma-sastras.* Without such a tabernacle of flesh and bone, the mere life-force of Vedas cannot function with effect"[1]. In fact the *Puranas* are called the 'Panchama Veda" (the fifth Veda) or "the Veda of Vedas"[2].

(3)

Hence the *Puranas* may also be regarded as the authoritative sources of knowledge. They are aptly described as the "pilots of Hindu civilization and culture"[3]. They have heralded the moral and spiritual evolution of the Hindus. They are the true representatives of Hindu culture and philosophy.

(4)

Now coming to *Visnu Purana.* It is said that Parasara wrote *Visnu Purana.* It emphasizes upon ethical religion and points out that moral upliftment of man is the pre-condition of his spiritual evolution. In this sense the *Visnu Purana* may be rightly called an encyclopaedia of Hindu religion and ethics.

The practice of ethical religion is the message of *Visnu Purana.* It is concerned with the moral evolution of the self. And for any religion morality is essential. Both religion and morality gain from each other in their togetherness. If religion is the fountain head of morality, the latter purifies religion. Religion without morality is hypocrisy. The influence of any religion on society is to be measured in terms of the moral people, it produces. In the opinion of *Visnu-purana,* the essence of religion is good conduct *(sadachara).* Virtue is the epitome of the religion of *Visnu Purana.* But morality cannot be hanging in the air. It should have a philosophic basis. And that depends on the nature of Reality as enunciated by *Visnu Purana.* According to *Visnu Purana, Visnu* is the soul of all creation.

(5)

The philosophy of *Visnu purana* is a supporting philosophy of life. The supreme Reality in Hindu philosophy is called Brahman. *Visnu purana* calls it *Visnu.* The Reality is both *saguṇa* and *nirguṇa.* It is all pervasive. In fact that is the literal meaning of the word '*Visnu*'. The Self of man, in essence, is identical with Visnu. It is both transcended and immanent.[4]

According to *Visnu Purana,* every thing in the God and nothing is apart from him. 'Sarvani *Visnu-mavain jagat*'. The universe is real because the Lord wears it, in the form of His *Kaustubhamani* (gem)[5]. He dwells in the whole universe [6]. The organic conception of Reality is not entirely ruled out in the *Visnu Purana.*

In the *Visnu Purana,* the reality is described as non-dual. The wise see Reality as non-dual[7]. It is both manifest and unmanifest. Visnu is *Vibhudesa,* the supreme ruler of the universe. He is the *Viswavilas* the play of the world[8]. Visnu plays all the three roles of Brahma, Visnu and Maheswara[9]. He has many names such as Bhagavan, Vasudeva, Hari Parameswar, Paramatman etc. He is also identified with the *Pranava* (oum)[10]. Visnu Purana declares : ''Give up all knowledge of duality. Be convinced that I, You and all these are only *atmasvarupa*'. Meditate on Advaita.

What is the basis of the moral call of *Visnu Purana*? It is the clarion truth that Reality is non-dual : ''........... since all the creatures are a manifestation of Visnu and one and the same God dwells in all; there is the therefore no reason why we should not be good to all mankind or rather creature-kind''[12]. He who injures living beings, injures himself; for Hari is identical with all living beings''[13]. Thus Advaita or non-dualism is the philosophic basis of the ethical religion of *Visnu purana.* It emphasizes on duty. It prescribes the duties one is to perform in different spheres of life.[14] It warns human beings against neglecting duties. Duties include *Varna dharma Asrama dharma, Varnasrama dharma, svadharma niskama dharma'.* The meritorious and the dutiful shall be happy' is the prime teaching of *Visnu Purana.* It reminds us of the Gita statement : *nahi Kalyana krta kaschit durgatimtata gachhati* [15] (the doer of good never gets a fallen state). The improvement of one's lot depends upon good conduct [16]. Life without betterment is no life. A Good person is one who is free from vice. 'Virtue is to be practised and vice to be eschewed'. 'The virtuous prosper and the vicious degenerate'. 'Be good to the sinner'. 'Be a friend to all creatures'. 'Speak not bitter words'. 'The happiest man is one who entertains no ill will against others'. 'One must look upon all creatures as one's self'. 'Do nothing unto others, that one does not desire for oneself' ...... These are some of the ethical teachings of *Visnu Purana.*

(6)

Why should man be moral ? *Visnu-Purana* would say that the man should be moral, not for the sake of being moral (as such a proposition is psychologically unsound), but for the sake of achieving the highest end, the *summum bonum* viz *Moksa,* or liberation from bondage (or spiritual freedom). It consists in the practice of devotion of God. *Visnu Purana* is never tired of saying that happiness and prosperity are dependent upon God's grace. Man should contribute to the highest good of the universe. He should proceed to make this universe perfect by his good conduct. But why human beings seem to drift away from the *Summum bonum? Visnu Purana* says; it is because of man's attachement to the body and the objects of enjoyment, worldly pleasures only delude us. This is all because of ignorance or *avidya.*

(7)

How to remove this ignorance ? What is the means ? *Visnu purana* says : By *Jnana* one should give up the delusion of duality. Detachment *(vairagya)* is very essential for obtaining *Jnana. Visnu purana* further advocates *'sadhana catustava'* viz Jnana (arsdom), karma (action) bhakti (devotion) and *Yoga* (union with God).

Jnana means discriminative knowledge. The distinction between the eternal and non-eternal, the good and bad, the right and wrong, *dharma* and *adharma. Jnana* is like sun dispelling wintermist or light removing darkness. It is the sole means to the final goal. *Visnu Purana* calls for cultivating *jnana-dristi* (looking upon the whole humanity as one), [17] which alone removes hatred and bitterness from the heart of man.

Karmas are to be performed for self-purification. Mind, which is fluctuating and inconstant, which is full of dirt, is the cause of all bondage. Hence it is to be purged of its defects and impurities. The mind then becomes fit to receive *jnana.* Thus performance of *niskama karma* is very essential for winning merit and better condition and also to obtain the grace of God ..... argue Kesidhwaj and Khandikya in the *Visnu Purana.* [18] Work is worship. One worships Visnu by performing ones one's own duties and in no other way ..... says *Visnu-Purana.*[19]

But how to purify the mind ? Through the practice of Yoga ..... says *Visnu Purana.* Empty mind is a devil's workshop. Practice the eight limbs of Yoga and fill your mind with good activity, constant meditation and God's love. When this training of mind is continued for long, mind gets enlightened and one attains god head ..... says *Visnu Purana.*[20]

It must be admitted, that *Visnu-Purana* also leans towards *bhakti*. It looks upon *bhakti* as one of the means to *Moksa.* Bhakti means intense love of God. In other words, it means total surrender to God. A *bhakta* aspires to live constantly in the presence of God. He is more inclined to tasting sugar rather than becoming sugar himself. Even to be a *bhakta.* God's grace is very essential. God's grace makes the impossible, possible ..... says. *Visnu purana.*[21] Constant remembrance of God is the best means to liberation, in the *Kaliyuga* pronounces *Visnu Purana.* [22] The assurance of *Visnu Purana* is that nothing can harm a devotee.

Visnu Purana it should be said, is a treatise of *atma vidya.* It is deeply interested in the 'ascent to divinity'. What it preaches is a religion of love peace. It is an ocean of spiritual knowledge of the ancient sages. It is very categorical in saying that spiritual progress is impossible, without moral perfection. 'Live a divine life' is its universal message.

(8)

When all is said and done, one question remains to be answered : What is the modern relevance of the Puranas in general and *Visnu Purana* in particular ? Have Puranas lost their relevance in modern times, which is an age of science, and computer technology ? Science and technology have given us plenty of sophisticated luxuries and comforts. Moreover there is an adage; '*Purana* is to preach, brinjal is to eat' which seems to undermine the importance of the *Puranas* in the contemporary age.

In answer it should be said that the Puranas are becoming increasingly important in the modern age. They have not lost relevance. What if modern age, is an age of science and Technology? But what about the following questions :

What is the worth and the meaning of life ? What is the differences between the life of animals and the life of morality lived by human beings ? What is the real nature and content of man ? How about the human values ? Do they spring from science technology and computers ? No, They spring from philosophy and religion. And Puranas are the simplest forms and at the same time the fountain heads of philosophy and religion. Moreover life is full of riddles. These riddles are beyond the ken of science, technology and computers. *Puranas,* it should be said, are still relevant as they inculcate, in the minds of human beings, respect for truth. *Puranas* in India are increasingly becoming *dharmic* behives with open discussion on dharmic issues.

The *Puranas* contain a vast sociology of the ancient Hindus. Description of acute poverty, social justice, abortion, child-labour, welfare etc have been adequately dealt with in the *Puranas.* In the *Puranas* there are also interesting discussions on the political organisations. Democracy is made no laughing stock in the *Puranas.* The codes of laws and ethical codes are best recorded in the *Puranas.* The great and enobling ideas and ideals of the *Puranas* have exerted a cultural influence in India. They are still potent factors in the domestic, social and religious life of the Hindus.

And look at the relevance of the *Puranas* to the men of literature. What pleasure one derives from reading the *Puranas* in original Sanskrit. It is sonorous music, fine similes, fascinating utterances pictorial illustrations, the qualities of exceptional ability and scholarship, solutions to some ultimate questions of life and the secrets of our soul. They have been the inspiration of a national literature, adding to it, much grandeur and sublimity. They contain much suggestive literature, which has universal appeal. They create a feeling of brotherhood amongst all nations. For thousands of years, the puranic stories have remained a living form. They have been continuously adapted to suit new values and circumstances. The *Puranas* make the hardest of hearts to go soppy and wistful. The Puranic ideas appeal infinitely to the bungling idiot in most of us. They Philosophize and soliloquise about the inevitable passage of time and other meaningless tripe. They resurrect the issues that have almost become dead-letters.

The *Puranas* infuse optimism in the minds of readers when they declare that even demons, the most wicked may secure salvation through the grace of God, which is another word for moral good. They enable the reader to grasp and proclaim the ''good''. They form profound spiritual teachings.

In conclusion, it may be said that *Puranas* may be remote from us in time but not in thought. We should have a right understanding of the purport of the *Puranas.* We should have a scientific and critical study of *Puranas* with an eye for research. The *Puranas* have survived to us in the rich and abundant store house of Sanskrit literature. Only thing is, we must live upto their teachings. The possible gap between theory and practice should be sincerely avoided. The study of the *Puranas* brings a new era of peace and spirituality. They form a basic for national solidarity, with their continued emphasis on the moral teachings. They may be regarded as a common man's vademecum and guide in matters, moral and spiritual. Their teachings are more needed, much more than ever. *Visnu Purana* in particular, exhorts human beings to cultivate *Sama-drsti,* an eye for equality. Its commanding message is that the right-doers are rewarded and the wrong-deers are penalised.

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16. *Visnu Purana*, Part-III, Section 11, Verse 2
17. Ibid, Part V, Section 1, Verse 45
18. Ibid, Part VI, Section 6, Verses 9-12
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(Continued from last issue)

Bhagwadgeeta & its exposition
by Sant Dnyaneshwar

Chapter IX (राजविद्याराजगुह्य योग)

The Supreme knowledge and The Sovereign Secret Mystery

(Sanskrit script followed by English Translation)

मयाऽध्यक्षेण प्रकृतिः सूयते सचराचरम् ।
हेतुनानेन कौन्तेय जगद्विपरिवतति ॥१०॥

Under my guidance Nature gives birth to all things moving and unmoving; by this means, Oh Son of Kunti (Arjuna) the world moves on from creation to creation (endlessly).

Sant Dnyaneshwar explains -

Oh Arjuna, as all the movements and dealings of people in this world are basically due to the Sun; similarly the creation of the world is all due to Me alone. When I take upon Maya, the supreme fascination of ignorance on Me, the creation of all beings takes place through Me because of Maya and people think I am the cause of creation. Thus though the beings are created through Me, I am not in them. Please understand this mysterious action of Mine in the light of true knowledge. The essence of knowledge that the living beings are not in Me and I am not in them is essential and not to be forgotten. The doors of senses should be closed, outside sensual objects be shut off and the above essential secret should be stored in your heart. Until this secret of the Vedantic principles is well-understood, none will understand my true nature and existence. When we search for particles of corn in heaps of husk, our efforts go waste. Similar is the case of those who seek to know my true nature without knowing the essence of the above principle. With an array of skilful acrobatics of logic persons think they have found out the secret of nature and presence but it is all a capsule of ignorance. Can the land become wet with the water seen in a mirage. The reflection of the moon is seen in the fishing net when it is in water. Will the reflection of moon be seen caught in the net when the net is brought to the shore? At times people describe their spiritual experience in words of talk, but when the time of real test arises, their skill of words in talk is not useful.

अवजानन्ति मां मूढा मानुषीं तनुमाश्रितम् ।
परं भावमजानन्तो मम भूतमहेश्वरम् ॥११॥

The unwise despise Me not recognising Me when I appear in human form, not knowing my higher nature as the Lord of all beings.

Sant Dnyaneshwar explains -

Scared of being ensnared in the wordly affairs, if you earnestly desire to attain Me, you have to remember what I told you as the secret of real nature. A man suffering from jaundice sees even the stars in the sky as yellow; likewise a man sees shortcoming in My faultless divine nature. A man whose taste has grown bitter due to fever, will say that the milk is bitter, likewise men see me as a human being even though I am not so. Therefore, Oh Arjuna, I caution you, do not look to me in a gross view, because it will go in vain. The gross view itself comes in the way of seeing the Reality. By drinking nectar in dream, nobody becomes immortal. If the swan dives into water to catch hold of the reflection of the star thinking it is a pearl, will lose its life. If a man sits under a Babhool tree thinking it to be a Kalpvruksha, he will get nothing, nor his desires fulfilled. Similarly, those who imagine Me as God himself when I appear in human form in the world, are deluded like those who try to catch the reflection of moon in a river. Think, if a man wants to reach the sea in the west, but he starts walking towards the east, how he can reach the sea in the west ? As we cannot get corn particles in a heap of husk, can one get Me in the whole of the spreadout world which is but a reflection of Me due to Maya ?

Though I am self-created, people make idols of Me, try to bring life in the idol with Prana-pratishtha mantras, offer Me flowers, eatables, fruits and all as if I am a human being and submerge the idol in water at the end of their festival.

Likewise, people imagine Me to be a human being, but this assumption itself comes in the way of Real knowledge of My nature and existence.

(to be continued ...)

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The name of God is a symbol which carries spiritual power. Meditation (Smarana) is the process of identification with God. Jnaneswar says, "Oh God; Thy name alone is real, real. All things other than the Name are worthless". When the name of God is given by a spiritual teacher who has realised God, it can be repeated by the disciple by taking resort to any posture. It is sure to fructify in course of time. Initiation may not result in instantaneous mystical experience. But it makes a definite beginning in that direction. What is important is the power contained in the Name.

- Gurudeo Ranade

Causes for the Decline of Religion, according to Whitehead

The sophistications and trivialities of the artificial life of comforts have trapped men. Therefore they tend to explain away, distort, and bury the truly religious spirit. Undoubtedly there are ups and downs in the life of religion. And yet in some form or other it has been there always, however far back we go in the study of the history of mankind in its pursuit of civilization. The ethos of materialistic considerations has eclipsed the voice of religion in the life of man who is lost in its trappings. Sensitive souls have wondered how or why or when such states of affairs have been brought about. They are unable to understand how what could not have happened earlier could happen now. At the moment the voice of religion thus seems to have been rendered helpless and ineffective under the bludgeons of ignorance and brute force.

According to Whitehead, we have in religion a general force, which influences men in shaping their individual character as men. The force of our religious institutions transforms the individual and the society. It is a permanent element in human nature. Therefore as a necessary preliminary, Whitehead discusses religion ''as an unquestioned factor throughout the long stretch of human history''[1] before he can divine generic notions applying to every variety of experience. Before he can undertake this task he has his reasons to account for the progressive decline of the tone of religious life. Whitehead goes to the extent of saying that even where interest in religion is relatively intense; it still falls as the generations pass, though now and then there may have been religious reactions and revivals. In this present state of religion the living spirit of religion has evaporated leaving only the husk of a formula as an ornament for snobbish life. Whitehead has given a graphic description of this state of affairs thus : "But on the whole, during many generations, there has been a gradual decay of religious influence in European civilization. Each revival touches a lower peak than its predecessor, and each period of slackness a lower depth. The average curve marks a steady fall in religious tone... Religion is tending to degenerate into a decent formula wherewith to embellish a comfortable life."[2]

According to Whitehead, the progressive decline of its living relevance is due to many causes. He gives an analysis of this decline of religion in the hope of restoring religion to its old power and reconstructing it on a rational basis. He holds that men of religion have been unprepared to face change brought about by novel situations of thought in general and science in particular, e.g. Galileo and the Church controversy. Men of religion tend to swear by their own prophets and scriptures and then somehow to justify their authoritative formulations, beliefs and rituals. Thus when they are unable to face change and give a rational justification of their beliefs and practices they are put on a very weak, defensive, and apologetic tone. Whitehead puts it thus: "The result of the continued repetition of this undignified retreat, during many generations, has at last almost entirely destroyed the intellectual authority of religious thinkers."[3]

Men of religion claim eternality for the truths of religion. But those truths, Whitehead holds, require to be presented in the idiom of each age and in their living relevance to life, as demanded by the conditions of modern knowledge. And yet the so-called custodians of religion could not dare to effect such relevant modifications "because they shirked the task of disengaging their spiritual message from the associations of a particular imagery."[4]

Another reason for the modern fading of interest in religion is the problem of what we mean by religion. Custodians of religion presented "aspects of religion which are expressed in terms either suited to the emotional reactions of bygone times or directed to excite modern emotional interest of nonreligious character."[5] As a result of the impact of scientific and technological progress men have developed the habit of critical analysis of the causes and conditions of their practice of life. Nothing should be accepted except on the strength of evidence or sound reasons. But the clergy failed to give compelling reasons as to why men should practice religion in the traditional fashion. Instead, "It has confined to the suggestions of minor vapid reasons why people should continue to go to the church in the traditional fashion."[6]

Every religion is immovably encased in a rigid system of symbolism and imagery. Disregarding what is essential to religion, each religion has rigidly stuck to its own form of symbol, imagery as the only mode in which the perception of religious truth can be expressed. Consequently as Whitehead says, "Quarrels over symbolism constitute one of the many causes of religious discord."[7] Whitehead therefore maintains that men have adopted shifting attitudes towards religion because of such discords, disagreements, doubts and difficulties about its topics. People generally think that which is disputed, doubted and beset with difficulties and disagreements is unimportant, untrue and merely subjective. But Whitehead has shown that no field of enquiry including mathematics is free from doubt, difficulties and disagreements. *(Cf. Essays in Science and Philosophy, p. 156:Process and Reality, p.8)*

Further the central topic of religion, namely God, is presented under a misapprehension as an absolute despot. Such a concept of despotic God is bound to call out critical reaction on the part of the democratic instincts of men. Whitehead holds that this is fatal to religion in so far as it fails to command immediacy of assent.

Also there is a subtle degradation of religion presented as an agency in the formation of pleasing social relations. As Whitehead says, "Above and beyond all things religious life is not a research after comfort."[8] This is so by reason of the fact that religion, when effective, reduces almost to impotence the values of the material world. It wins its battles because of its secret appeal to the spiritual element, in its enemy, that humane element from which man, in his utmost effort to be brutal, cannot quite shake himself free. It ends by the units of material force gradually deserting their own banners and coming round to the side of man's religious nature.

Moreover every religion has insulated itself from receiving any influence from other religions of the world. Religions have failed to fertilize each other. Each is enclosed within the shell of its own enlightenment and practices, thus drawing inspiration from its own dogmas. This is, as Whitehead says, suicidal to religion.

But this is not to be, since religion has emrged as a fundamental factor in human nature. The force of religious institutions is one factor, which according to Whitehead, persistently shows an upward trend. Religion has been able to maintain its seminal character even when unfavourable vicissitudes prevailed. The process of religious evolution can be compared to the slow geological processes in the earth's crust. Religion is still in the making, the processes that brought forth inherited religion have never ceased, they will continue as long as the great and complex fabric of man's life endures.

Anthropology testifies to the fact of religion, in some form or other, as an unquestioned factor in man's history. It is not his business, as a scientist, to pass value judgements about the truth or falsity of religion. If any anthropologist does so it can only be in the capacity of a philosopher of religion and can be met as such. Thus even if religion is a delusion or illusion or fraud perpetrated by any vested interest on such a large scale, the fact of religion requires to be accounted for. If the facts are not in doubt the only question is How to interpret them ? In this respect no one is more acutely conscious of the vast immensity and complex many-sidedness of religion than Whitehead. No one is more aware of the weakness of insight and the deficiencies of language than he. The faltering track record of human discrimination must induce in any inquirer a sense of religious humility, as it did in the case of Whitehead. The religious humility of Whitehead is evident from the impression, which dominates his mind in giving us the interpretation of unquestioned facts when he says, ''how shallow, puny, and imperfect are our efforts to sound the depths in the nature of things.''[9]

It may seem strange, to some minds that a man of science and mathematics, that Whitehead was, should come to religion and metaphysics. Whitehead was a man of varied interests even as a student. He was interested in play, school studies, extra curricular studies, transactions of daily life and what not. His family and educational environment helped to foster his interest in religion. When all is said his synoptic interest seems to have demanded comprehensive completeness and coherence in his account of experience. Accordingly he is infected by an attitude : ''Have a care here is something that matters''. Here again the religious touch of inviolable sanctity, sacredness and dignity of evidence is rendered perceptible. The why, the wherefore and the whither of things are the main concerns and passions of Whitehead's interest finding best expression in his book *Religion in the Making*. *"Religion in the making"*, Victor Lowe claims, "as a whole is one of the best things he wrote as a philosopher."[10]

Today men hardly brother about the great question of the why and the wherefore of things. Anything and everything is being questioned in the name of being scientific. An attitude of promiscuous but irresponsible questioning of even what we unfailingly presuppose in our thought and practice of life has come to prevail. But it must be said that such questioning and criticism without responsibility can only be the privilege of the indifferent through the ages.

All sorts of things are said and done in the name of religion, without even caring for what religion is or is not. Even the field of religion has its share of charlatans, hoaxes and hypocrisy. Such a state of affairs may be due, partly at least, to the failure of men of religion to make clear what is essential and unessential to a living religion. It is in this context that Whitehead's attempt to determine the nature and status of religion acquires a living relevance and significance.

Whitehead recognizes and respects the claim of religion, as along with science, to serve as a source of evidence and knowledge about the world. Its contribution to the well being of mankind cannot be underestimated. Accordingly, Whitehead holds that religion can be and has been good. It has been an effective agency in human progress and civilization. But Whitehead is not blind to the shortcomings in the practice of religion. Unlike the popular mind, which believes in the necessary goodness of religion, Whitehead readily recognizes that religion can be and has been bad. He mentions the horrors which the superstitious practice of religion has engendered, namely superstition, bigotry, human sacrifices, wild sensuous orgies, the cunning exploitation of the credulous and so on. He questions this kind of popular conception of religion and the conception of religion as a stagnant perfection.

Further more he also calls into question the contemporary attempts to debunk religion academically and professionally. However crude and credulous the theory and practice of religion may be there is no gainsaying the fact that it has profoundly influenced the lives of men by bringing solace to their difficult lives. The truly religious spirit utters no dogma, no command, but only an appeal. It (the truly religious spirit) calls to our spirits, the widespread prevalence of religion among a vast majority of mankind, even if it is an illusion or delusion, which is most incredibly unlikely, requires to be accounted for. Therefore we find Whitehead placing religion among the sources of experience furnishing evidence concerning the nature of things by formulating the criterion for the validity of religious or any other evidence and "to consider the type of justification which is available for belief in doctrines of religion."[11] He holds that much of the confusion in respect of our intellectual problems of religion and philosophy is due to the neglect of the fundamental principles of all methodology, namely "the relevance of evidence depends on the theory which is dominating the discussion."[12]

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Peace and joy are two incompatible emotions. Peace keeps us on a level and joy lifts us upward. There are three kinds of emotions (i) Anatropic, those that are elative (ii) Metatropic, those that are equanimons and (iii) Katatropic, those that are depressive. It is difficult to say which is a higher category. God gives peace to someone and joy to someone else. Both are significant and arise as a result of God - realisation. Our Sampradaya tells us that we should not be after them, they must descend on us of their own accord. It is important as it is rare to see peace and joy simultaneously in a single saint. Shri Maharaj, however, displayed both of them. When the great spiritual power comes down and is seen to envelope the while universe, it give rise to the highest peace and the highest joy.

- Gurudeo Ranade

Philosophy of Life in Bhagavad-Gita-1

Introduction :

Bhagvad Gita is treated as a sacred book and many recite it daily without much effort to understand its deeper meaning. It is really a philosophy to be practiced in the day-to-day life. This realisation of course comes at a later age in our life.

Usually children are advised and start memorising some chapters of Bhagavad-Gita in the childhood at the instance of parents and teachers. I still remember that in the 8th or 9th standard the Sanskrit teacher made us to memorise some chapters of Gita and made us understand it by explaining the meaning and some of his explanations did made some impressions on the mind, but at that young age it was not so easy. Later after graduation in engineering, I studied for degree in literature and in the two papers of Sanskrit, one entire section was devoted to Gita, So little better understanding was possible. More systematic study was started at an advance age and then many questions started troubling the mind. Some of these were - why there is so much repetition - why so many topics appear again and again in different chapters, why there are some contradictions - opposite views - extremes on both sides on some of the topics and main question was why Gita is continued much longer after the Vishwaroop Darshan in the chapter eleven - God Realisation being the main aim in life. A study of many translations and commentaries on Gita such as that of Shankaracharya, Satavlekar, Gita Dharma Mandal, Lokmanya Tilak, Vinoba Bhave, Radhakrishnan, Mahatma Gandhi, Ramkrishna Ashram, Dandekar and many others was started. This effort was helpful to understand the meaning of various stanzas but the questions remained unresolved. At a later stage while studying Dnyaneshwari for a research work, references to Gurudev Ranade's 'Dhyan Gita' and 'Gita as a Philosophy of God Realisation' were found and reading of these helped to sort out the problems that were troubling the mind. Notes on the study of Gurudev Ranade's books ultimately led to the Marathi Book 'Dhyanopkarini Gita' published in December 2004. The study continues with little better understanding because of Gurudev Ranade's books. It is proposed to examine some of the concepts in Gita in the light of the study in this series.

The rearrangement of 365 out of 700, selected stanzas, by Gurudev Ranade in 12 chapters in Dhyan Gita is very appropriate and not only removes the problem of repetition but also culminates after the Vishwaroop Darshan with only one last chapter as an assurance for the sadhakas. The question of resolution of contradictions - opposite views on some of the topics is also very well sorted out by Gurudev Ranade in his book 'Gita as a Philosophy of God Realisation'. He has mentioned all such places and also quoted the stanzas, which reconcile the two opposite views. It would be useful to mention here the scheme of Dhyan Gita as arranged by Gurudev Ranade because it helps us to understand Gita better. (1) The first and second chapter indicate the aim of the sadhaka and help us to understand the philosophical basis of the two aspects of God the *sagun* and the *nirgun* (2) the third and fourth chapters indicate the situation of the sadhaka (3) the fifth and sixth chapters cover the moral preparation (4) seventh to tenth chapters contain the process towards God-Realisation through action (कर्म), knowledge (ज्ञान), meditation (ध्यान), and devotion (भक्ति) (5) God-Realisation (विश्वरूपदर्शन) (6) assurance of God. (भगवदाश्वासनं). The grouping of all relevant stanzas under different sub-heads with appropriate titles in all the twelve chapters is very helpful not only for meditation but also to understand the philosophy of Gita better which further helps in meditation and development of the sadhaka toward his goal.

There is no detailed commentary or introductory remarks by Gurudev Ranade in Dhyan Gita, which offers only pure text, and we have missed a great deal which would have helped us understand Gita better. But his book 'Gita as a Philosophy of God Realisation', the elucidation and translation of 'Dhyan Gita' by M.S. Deshpande, remarks of Gurudev Ranade in various sittings at Nimbal as reported in 'The Glimpses of Shri Ranade' (Edited by B.R. Kulkarni) and The observations of Shri B.R. Kulkarni in his book 'Professor R.D. Ranade As a Teacher and Author' and various books of Kakasaheb Tulpule and others are available to us which help us understand Gita and the views of Gurudev Ranade much better. As mentioned above some concepts are proposed to be discussed in this series in light of all the available material as mentioned above.

The Ultimate Reality :

All the vedas, upanishads etc. and so also Gita indicate that there is one Spiritual Energy-the Ultimate Reality-that is pervading the universe, sustaining and guiding it. The whole world springs from it, lives in it and is ultimately dissolved in it. It is however difficult for a human being to understand this Ultimate Reality if he tries to understand with his limited power of senses and his intellect. He has to develop special intuitive power through meditation and experience it. But for him to work in that direction some guidelines come from the forms and attributes in various ways as felt by us in our existence in the world.

The first chapter of Dhyan Gita - ईश्वरस्वरूपवर्णनम् - describes the ultimate reality as seen or felt in form and attributes. It is named as God, Absolute, Spirit, Self etc. Nature of this ultimate Reality or God as a Supreme Person - पुरुषोत्तम- is described in the fifteenth chapter of original Gita (stanzas sixteen to eighteen).

(1) The Supreme Person - पुरुषोत्तम - is superior to the perishable i.e. all that is created which perish one time or the other - क्षर, and to the imperishable - अक्षर - the soul.

(2) Then further it is also described as a thread - सूत्रम् - of all the existences and soul -. the earth, the fire, ether, mind, understanding and self-sense all (stanzas four to seven in chapter seven of original Gita).

(3) It is further described as mellifluous essence or universal immanence of God in the form of qualities and seed as रस : which are actually created from him only as stated again in chapter seven (stanzas eight to twelve).

(4) Fourthly it is also described as the highest individual and supreme spirit - वैश्वानर - immanent in all the existences and illumination in the sun, the moon, also in the fire and sustaining the earth and all beings as their vital energy, the nectarian sap nourishing all herbs and further the digesting power of all beings through life breaths प्राण - and अपान. (stanzas 12 to 14 of chapter 15 of original Gita).

(5) Then it is also described as the sacrifice - यज्ञ- in totality i.e. the sacrifice and the sacrificer, the things offered and the process of offering in the sacrifice and the fire through which the offering is made, as also the father, the mother, the grandfather and the sustainer of the universe and further the holy one - ब्रह्म - and syllable Om - ॐकार, as also the three vedas. It is also the goal, the abode, and the refuge, witness, the friend, the supporter and the Lord, the origin and the

resting place, the treasure and the seed imperishable. The heat and light is radiated from it, rain comes from it, It is both immortality and death, the being and the no-being. (stanzas sixteen to nineteen of chapter nine of original Gita).

(6) It is also the great artificer - मायी - as described in stanzas twenty four to twentysix of chapter seven of original Gita, and creates camaflouge around it so that no one is able to know it, Really it is the unborn spirit with supreme nature which is eternal and excellent, also knowing the past, the present and future but ignorant only consider it as manifest in form.

It takes birth - अवतार - through its super power from age to age to protect the good and destroy the wicked when righteousness declines unrighteousness reigns supreme. Gurudev Ranade has also explained that such manifestation - अवतार - also takes place in the heart of those who meditate intensely and can feel the presence of the God the Ultimate Reality once the devotee reaches a certain stage in his *sadhana. Avatar* is also explained by many authorities like Ramdas as the being with much higher consciousness. Hence *Sadguru* in *sagun* form is also an *Avatar* in this sense. This is good assurance for the beginners in spiritual progress.

The last important point in the first chapter of Dhyan Gita of Gurudev Ranade is this Ultimate Reality is also the Absolutely Transcendent Being - अतिष्ठान, which means everything that is endowed with strength, glory and splendour is only a spark of the luster of the Ultimate Reality. It is pervading all this universe with a fraction of it and also remains outside of it. This statement indicates that one should not think of Ultimate Reality as manifest only in any personified form like human being or an idol but think about it as pervading all, and also beyond all the existences as felt by us. As Ramdas has said in *Dasbodh,* जेणे केले चराचर । केले

सृष्ट्यादि व्यापार । सर्वकर्ता निरंतर । नाम ज्याचे ।। 8-1-17 ।। and further 'नाना देव होऊन बैसला । नाना शक्तिरूपें जाला । भोक्ता सकळ वैभवाला । तोचि येक ।। 18-1-17 ।।.

All this description in the first chapter of Dhyan Gita - ईश्वरस्वरूपवर्णनम्- as presented by Gurudev Ranade leads us to the impersonal, formless - निर्गुण - the real Ultimate Reality which is explained in the second chapter - ब्रह्मस्वरूपवर्णनम् - of Dhyan Gita. Under seven sub headings the stanzas from different chapters of original Gita are presented here which bring out the real Nature of the Absolute - the Ultimate Reality.

(1) The first is Imperishable - अविनाशित्वम् - The reality is imperishable - immortal. It never ceases to exist and no one can destroy it. All this world has come from it. (stanzas sixteen and seventeen of chapter two of original Gita). As also further the Atman is unborn, eternal, everlasting and primeval and not slain when the body is slain (stanzas 19 and twenty of chapter two of original Gita).

(2) It is uncontaminated - अलेपत्वम्. Just as the all pervading ether - आकाश - is present everywhere but not contaminated because of its subtlety, though the Atman is present in the body is not contaminated by it. (stanza thirty two of chapter thirteen of original Gita).

(3) It is illuminating - प्रकाशित्वम्. Just as the sun illuminates the Atman illuminates all that is created in this world - the क्षेत्रम् (stanza thirty three of chapter thirteen of original Gita).

(4) It transcends the five causes of action; it is Absolute and non-doer. (The five causes according to *Sankhya Shastra* are the seat or the base for action, the agent *(jivatma)*, various instruments and diverse activities, the presiding deity being the fifth) (stanzas thirteen to sixteen of original Gita). It does not connect actions with their fruits nor does accept the merit or sin - It is the Nature *(Prakriti)* that functions (stanzas fourteen

and fifteen of original Gita)

(5) It is non-enjoyer - a witness and sustainer may be called a supreme Self - the sovereign Lord and Superior Spirit. (stanza twenty two of chapter thirteen of original Gita).

(6) It is unknowable - अविज्ञेयत्वम्. It is far and near, within and without, having eyes everywhere and is the highest object of knowledge.

(7) It is the greatest wonder of all wonders - आश्चर्यमयत्वम्. (stanza twenty nine of chapter two).

The stanza twentyseven and twenty eight of chapter thirteen and stanza nineteen of chapter seven of original Gita also tell us to look at God or Ultimate Reality in everything that we see around. As Tukaram has said 'नर नारी बाळे अवघा नारायण'- he sees God in every human being. Savata Mali was also God even the vegetables he was growing 'कांदा मुळा भाजी अवघी विठाबाई माझी' Krishnadayarnav has said God has himself taken all the forms in this world 'हरि ही आपणचि जग झाला'. Ramdas has said in Dasbodh (6-3-18) whatever is created is already occupied by Brahm (God as Ultimate Reality) and all the things that are seen vanish only the Imperishable God remain - 'जें जें कांडीं निर्माण झालें । तें तें आधींच ब्रह्में व्यापिलें । सर्व नाशतां उरलें । अविनाश ब्रह्म ॥' If such an understanding develops and if one sees God as the essence of everything, it is assured by Gita that one could unite with it in the end. Here we are also reminded of the principle explained by Gurudev Ranade of Doctrine of Asyptotism or the continuous journey towards the goal of God Realisation.

Thus the terms in both the first two chapters of Dhyan Gita - the terms contained in various stanzas of original Gita included therein and the above quoted stanzas, convey everything about the Ultimate Reality to us. They make us understand that by meditating on all those terms, we can experience it, though it is something that is pervading all and still beyond it and normally beyond our sensory power of understanding as an intellectual exercise. It has to be experienced by deeper thinking, by meditating, on those aspects explained thus. The essence then comes to our mind that really there is nothing except that one single absolute, but we have to deal with many things of this world in which we live in our day to day life. As Gurudev Ranade has said in his book 'Vedant' The reality of the world is a challenge to the absolutist. Though he insists that the Absolute alone is, he cannot deny that the world also *is* ... The realism upholds the world of experience as an independent fact.

Practical View :

As explained in various stanzas of Gita referred above if we move in this world with the understanding of God or Ultimate Reality at the back of our mind in all our actions our behaviour would get regulated, We will not find any problems in dealing with any situation in this transient, everchanging world, or in all our relations with all things seen or felt around. Nothing in this world of ours is permanent except the real Ultimate Reality.

One more practical aspect applicable in the day to day life of accepting the fact that everything in essence is God. We should think God or the Ultimate Reality is the owner of everything and he has given us all the things to us for our use, we don't own those. The Ishavasyopnishad also tells so. We should use those with detached mind as explained by Gita in *Karmyoga.* The idea of ownership or relationship should not rule our mind in our day to day life. Many problems and fights in the world would be eliminated if this ownership idea is set aside. Anything (property or any article or any relation) is available to us for our use but we should think of it as owned by God and he has made it available to us at his sweet will, it is not earned or owned by us, and that we should use it in a detached manner and not as our own possession. Such a thinking will also help our spiritual progress, and no limitations or difficulties need be felt from non availability or not getting something when we feel we should have it. Another practical aspect is also to be noted. It seems in our body there are two entities though really there is one. Very few of us can severe ourselves from the eating, sleeping man, the man who is affected by heat and cold, jealousy and anger, pain with pleasure. This is the part of mortality. This is the part that suffers, dies and changes because it is the product of the physical. It is good that it suffers. Through the suffering we are led to that other part of us that is eternal and selfless.

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In the initial stage, a rosary may be used for meditation. We should make it a rule not to take our meals or not to go to sleep unless we finish a fixed number of rounds on the rosary. We should not pay heed to the number of times the name is uttered. That may lead to egoism or sometimes to boredom. Sitting for meditation for a long time may probably create the devotional attitude. Once the devotional attitude take possession of the mind, the duration of meditation does not matter. The superconscious state is indescribable. Its experience by word of mouth is but a faint replica of it.

- Gurudeo Ranade

(Continued from last issue)

Ramachandra to Gurudev

A Piligrim's Progress

(Biography of Gurudeo Ranade)

His revered mother passed away on 19th Oct. 1918. She mediated on the Divine Name and merged in the absolute. When the flames rushed from the funeral pyre, he had the vision of Sesa (hooded serpant) dancing on the flames. This vision assured him that his mother had attained the blessed state. Gurudev greatly loved his mother. Naturally her departure made him extremely miserable.Still his spiritual progress enabled him to control his grief and taught him to see the silver lining of happiness in the dark cloud of his supreme sorrow. Like happiness, sorrow also is a gift of God. All that the Lord does is meant for our welfare. It is this conviction that enabled him to lead his solitary life peacefully in the company of the Lord alone.

Adhyatma Bhavan :

We have given so far an account of his sorrow due to bereavements from his kith and kin. Here is the account of his misery born out of loss of money. In 1919 Gurudev purchased a plot of land near Bhandarkar Oriental Institute PUNE and got a bungalow built for him. When the construction of the building had been almost completed, he had a dream one day, in which Sri Maharaj told him that Sri Jnanesvara was angry with him. Hence he went to Alandi to have the Darsana of the *Samadhi* of Sri Jnanesvara. When he was paying his homage, his bungalow toppled down at Poona due to torrential down-pour of rain. After his return from Alandi Gurudev observed this strange mishap. Without losing heart he got it reconstructed again by fresh payment to the contractor. He named it "Adhyatma Bhavan" - "Abode of Spirituality" This "Abode" has played an important part in the *Sadhana* of Gurudev, both before and after his second illness. On the 13th day of the dark half of kartik 1841 (20-11-1919) he arranged a three-days' *Saptah*, received blessings from Sri Baba and began to stay there. Here he continued his meditation, with utmost intensity. At the same time, he also carried on vigorously his intellectual activities, such as higher research, study and writing books congenial to his spiritual development, in addition to his teaching work in the College. He was then residing with his sister in the town. But at night he used to go to the *Adhyatma Bhavan* to sleep. At times he spent days in *Adhyatma Bhavan* and enjoyed the blessedness of solitude. In the evening he often went for a walk by the side of the river *Mula,* and watched the horrible sight of the blood red flames of the funeral pyres in the burning ground nearby. He tried to develop his dispassion by the sight. He also used to go to the hills nearby, for meditation. Thus did his *Sadhana* reach the acme of intensity and granted him spiritual experiences of a higher order.

During this period Gurudev used to spend atleast seven hours in meditation. From 8 to 10.30 in the morning, from 12 to 1 at noon, from 8 to 10.30 in the evening and from 12 to 1 at night, he was performing rigorous meditation He used to sit for meditation regularly at the fixed time, in the manner described in the *Gita,* by sitting in a steady pose and by fixing his gaze on the tip of the nose. At other times also he was remembering the Name Divine.

He was residing in the *Adhyatma Bhavan* along with Sri Jagannath Lele and Sri Kakasaheb Karkhanis. They were helping him a good deal in his daily requirements and study. He used to relate to them some of his spiritual experiences. Sri Karkhanis has recorded three experiences of Gurudev of that period. One day he had the vision of the lustrous form of Sesa moving round his bungalow. His coils over coils were present everywhere. On a *Hanuman Jayanti* day, the birth day of *Shri Hanuman*, he had a vision of *Shri Hanuman* with flaming face and dazzling golden hair. Once he was going to *Alandi* along with Sri Karkhanis in a *tonga.* As soon as the *tonga* left Poona. He began to have the vision of *Sri Krishna,* as described in the Abhanga of Sri Jnanesvara, the substance of which is given below. This vision was present throughout his journey till they reached Alandi.

तुझिये निढळी कोटिचंद्र प्रकाशे ।
कमलनयन हास्यवदन भासे ॥
कृष्णा हाल कारे ! कृष्णा डोल कारे
घडिये, घडिये, घडिये, गुज बोल कारे ।
उभा राहोनिया कैसा हालवितो बाहो
बापरखुमादेवीवरु विठ्ठल ना हो

"Your forehead shines with the light of million moons,
You have lotus eyes and a smiling face.
O Krishna ! move on ! nod on, my dear !
Speak on lovingly for hours and hours
Lo ! how he stands and swings his arms !
As if beckoning me to come to Him.
Is He not Vithal, my Holy Father ?"

This beautiful experience had immensely endeared the Abhanga to him.

Flames of Jealousy :

Gurudev, during this period, was required to face the onslaughts of jealousy. His rapid progress, both intellectual and spiritual, lent him a grandeur which was too much for the petty persons to bear. It enkindled the embers of jealousy, in them, the flaming heat of which began to torment him. "He is a *Pandit* drawing a fat salary. How can he attend to *Sadhana* properly?" These were the taunting remarks flung at him by the *Sadhakas.* "Well, he is after all a seeker of the Spirit. Is it possible for him to teach in the College according to the time-table?'' Such were the words of censure that were levelled against him, time and again - by his colleagues. Thus he had become a target of this double attack from his uncharitable critics. But he did not allow them to disturb his peace of mind. Both praise and blame were treated alike by him. He was neither delighted by the praise nor dejected by the censure.

In this way, the loss of life due to the demise of his beloved ones, the loss of money due to the reconstruction of his bungalow, and the loss of fame resulting from the cruel criticism of jealousy, were all borne courageously by him without allowing them to seriously disturb his balance. He carried on his *Sadhana* and duty as usual.

Deadly Disease :

Thus did the Lord test him by removing his relatives, money and fame. But Gurudev fully stood the test. His faith and devotion, though sorely tried, did not either falter or vanish. On the other hand; it continued to grow day by day. Not satisfied with these tests, the Lord tried to undermine his health as well. He was required to undergo a more severe trial again. The present disease was more terrible than the previous one. If the former was the T.B. of the brain cells, this one was the alarming T.B. of the lungs.

This disease appears to be the outcome of the shocks received by him. Inspite of the bliss and peace he enjoyed, they could not but affect and undermine his already delicate health. The malarial climate of Poona easily affected his weakened body. With occasional ups and downs, the malarial fever, once lodged in his body, led him straight, in the course of time, to the portals of death, by developing T.B. germs in it. In the beginning the fever was mild. His high devotion to duty made him neglect it for a long time. This long neglect increased the intensity of the fever, which refused to be controlled by any medicine. All the medicines proved ineffective. His health began to deteriorate more and more. Finally he thought of the holy feet of his Master as his only refuge, took long leave, went to Inchagiri and stayed there. 'Let body decline, but God should shine'.

Or as he writes ''Finally of what value would our God-love be to us unless it sees in every happening in History and in Nature the beck and call of God, and unless it sees the fruitation of the logical law of sufficient Reason in the mystical realisation of a God-centered optimism. (राम भरोस)? (PGHL 97)

The present ordeal was more terrible than the previous one. If the former troubled him for six months, this one tormented him for a full year and a half. If in the former illness Gurudev was required to sport with the fear of death, this time he was called up to knock at the gates of death. Moreover, then he had the protection of his master and he had his loving mother and wife to nurse him. Their departure had deprived him of physical and spiritual solace. Now, though he could not get the holy company of his master, he could fortunately have the loving company of his senior spiritual brother Amburao Maharaj, Smt. Yamanakka (Cousin sister) had successfully taken the place of his mother. The company of Amburao and the care of Smt. Yamanakka enabled Gurudev to bear the agony of his illness. And through the unbounded grace of Sri. Maharaj he could come out of this terrible ordeal as well. This pure gold could glitter with redoubled splendour.

Thinking that he would not survive long, Gurudev had brought a will along with him. Once be requested Sri Baba (Amburao) to put his signature to it as a witness, but Sri Baba flatly declined to do so. Sri Maharaj had assured Gurudev in 1910, that he need not fear any death for sixty years. Sri Baba maintained that Sri Maharaja's words could never fail to be true. According to him there was no cause for any anxiety or fear. He not only did not put his signature to the will, but persuaded Gurudev to give up the idea itself.

After this incident, Sri Maharaj appeared twice in his dreams and gave him various suggestions together with afresh assurance of protection. In the first dream, Sri Maharaj told him, "You are not recovering from this illness because you don't consider the *vastu* before your eyes as God". This suggestion made him conscious of this lapse of his. Thereafter, his attitude towards the vastu underwent a change and he began to perform his meditation by considering it as God Himself.

In the second dream, Gurudev saw Sri Maharaj and Sri Baba conversing among themselves about him. Sri Maharaj asked Sri Baba "Do I not take care of his health?" When Gurudev related this dream to Sri Baba the next day, Sri Baba joyfully asked a disciple near him to beat the drum of victory. As Sri Maharaj had taken the responsibility of protecting Gurudev, there was no room for any fear. This was the idea that had made Sri Baba overjoyed.

A few days after this incident, Gurudev heard in a supersensuous manner these words of Sri Maharaj in his meditation : "Take that flower". He thereupon got up from his meditation and, as usual, went to the *samadhi* of his master. There he saw a single fresh flower on the *samadhi*. As he took it, Sri Pundappa who was performing the daily worship of the *samadhi*, returned there with all the materials of worship. Gurudev came to know from him that he had just removed all the flowers offered the previous day from the *samadhi*, had washed it clean and had gone out to bring the materials of worship. Gurudev was convinced that the flower he saw on the *samadhi* was the gift of Sri Maharaj. He carefully preserved it, dried it and daily began to take a small portion of it as medicine. This brought about a gradual improvement in his health.

The appearance of a God realiser in a dream vis-a vis his

God realization is an acid test regarding the veracity of the dream so also of the God - realiser. In Gurudev's word "Any dream in which a God - realiser appears to the dreamer must come true. You may very well test the veracity and reality of such dream-experiences in this way : if a saint appears in your dream and your aspiration is not fulfilled, he is not a God-realiser at all. The saint is Reality itself, as he is one with God. So. .. his apperance in a dream is the same as God's appearance. This furnishes a good reliable test". (PGKL 158)

Higher Experiences :

In addition to the inspiring company of Sri Baba, reassurance of long life by his master and an actual gift of an effective medicine for curing his illness, Gurudev got higher spiritual experiences during his stay there. He has mentioned a few of them in a Marathi *abhang,* the substance of which is given below :

अनंतरूपी आत्मा बिंबविला डोळा । होतसे सोहळा आनंदाचा ॥
शेषाचे वेटोळे प्रकाश चांदण्याचा । दिसतसे साचा दृष्टीपुढे ॥
मोतियाचें जाळे शुद्धवत चुरा । शोभें जैसा हिरा चकचकीत ॥
चक्रामध्ये चक्र एक नीलवर्ण । गुरुकृपे जाण दिसतसे ॥

* My *Atman* shines before my eyes
In Infinite vestures bright,
Sesa's coils and moonlight clear
Are granting superb delight.
Pearl-network and diamond dust
With a glittering splendour nice
Circle blue in a circle white
Are seen through Master's grace.

He saw the Eye with his eyes. The vision of this 'Universal Eye' threw him into ecstasy. Then he had the experience hearing the Name Divine. 'He related this to Sri Baba and asked him as to what he should do when he heard other names supersending the one bestowed upon him by Sri Maharaj. To this Sri Baba replied, "As the other names are the products of the name conferred by Sri Maharaj, we should stick to the original *sabija* name. Even though for the time being our mind merges in these names, as it does in the 'unstruct sound', we must hold fast to the original name itself'', Sri Baba also repeated the following lines of the Kannada song :

Isanu datta mahesa digambar
Ghosadolage mana nillisidane.

''He merged his mind in the sound : Datta, Mahesa, Digambar''. Gurudev had heard the same names that day. When Sri Baba came to know of this superb experience, he asked Gurudev to initiate fresh aspirants. But he modestly declined to do so, with the remark, ''When elders like your good self are there to initiate, I can't do that I would request you to excuse me''. Thereafter Gurudev's health improved sufficiently. He began to eat bread and rice. When he came to Inchagiri he was not able to stand up for *bhajan,* but on the last day of the *saptah* (in 1921), after the flowers were showered on the *Pothi,* he suddenly wore the blue silken *dhoti* and began to serve water to the *sadhakas* at the time of their partaking of *prasad.* He was very active till the end that day, and even took the prasad himself. In addition to this general improvement in health, there was a special reason for his extra activity on that day. His *vastu*, we are told, was glittering that day with extraordinary splendour, which naturally infused extra energy in him after the *saptah* was over, he took leave and blessings of Sri Baba, returned to Poona and joined his duty.

(to be continued ...)

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Book-Review

JIDDU KRISHNA MURTHY : WORLD PHILOSOPHER (1895-1986) - *HIS LIFE AND THOUGHTS* , Ed : *by Dr. C.V. Williams, pages 577, Published by Motilal Banarsidass Pvt. Ltd., Delhi, 2004.*

This voluminous volume seeks to interpret Philosophic concepts through the eyes of a hardcore rationalist. Fear of death is baseless and that death is not the end of life - the volume seeks to show. It is sincere in saying that it does not provide solutions to some of the age old problems in philosophy.

This book is a witness to Krishna Murthy's vast and varied literary legacy in the form of talks, discussions and writings. It is remarkable for its sheer simplicity, lucidity and directness. The style of writing is invigorating and all the while appealing.

The editor, through these writings seems to catch the 'core', as it were, of Krishna Murthy's writings. The book is also a proof of Krishna Murthy's innovative use of language; the 'old' words getting 'new' interpretations. This book is a newly designed edition of a popular title. Essays like *'pathlessness' 'Self', 'Science and revolution', 'Existence', 'Yoga and nameless'* are nicely collected by the learned editor.

Jiddu says that Truth is a pathless land. Thought is time. "Time is the psychological enemy of man". His is a holistic approach to life. His view of meditation is a quantum. He says "we are psychologically the result of our educational and Social environment". Society is the outward expression of

Consciousness. According to Jiddu, human consciousness is constituted of fear, conflict and sorrow. Meditation is a state of attention beyond thought, is the way to total freedom. Fear makes the mind dull and shallow.

Existence is relationship. Without relationship, one cannot exist. Life is a relationship. Relations are absolutely necessary.

Regarding education, Jiddu says that it is the educator who needs educating. Man is a bundle of memories. Such questions as existence, truth, are asked by the intelligent mind. Jiddu is never tired of saying that only in freedom that one can learn.

Jiddu's writings are beyond myth and tradition and are aptly to be called "The Real Revolution". In short, the book edited by the learned Scholar, Williams is an excellent introduction to an over-view of Jiddu's writings. It is a mammoth erudite book which highlights various aspects of Jiddu's stimulating writings.

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A brahmachari is good for living a life of celebacy, but a person who can live a life of celebacy in the presence of beautiful and obliging wife is more than a brahmachari.

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We must be fixed up in our own rupa, svarupa, savarupa-siddhi. Svarupa siddhi means to be engaged in the service of Lord. That is real mukti.

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If you want perfection in your business, then you must try to satisfy the Supreme personality of Godhead. Otherwise you are simply wasting your time.

- A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

Activities of A.C.P.R.

(Quarterly Report for the period ending 31st Dec. 2005)

On Saturday 08-10-2005 The discourse was given by Swami Raghaveshanandji Maharaj (Secretary, Ramkrishna Mission Ashram, Belgaum) on subject ''Shri Madbhagvat Puran'', The discourse was very well attended & highly appreciated by the audience.

We thanks the following Donors :

1) Shri C.R. Lele, Gujarat Rs. 300-00
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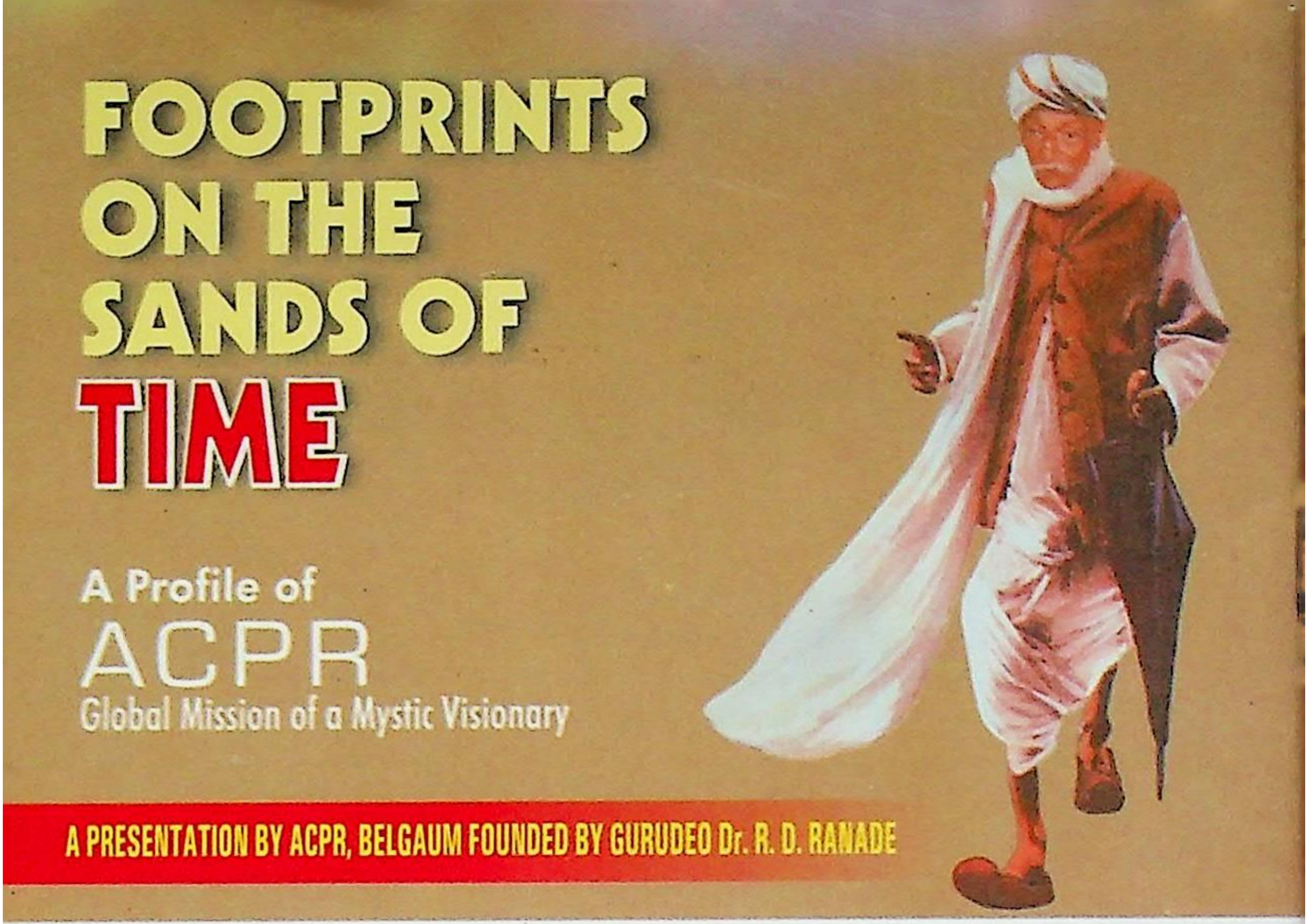

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